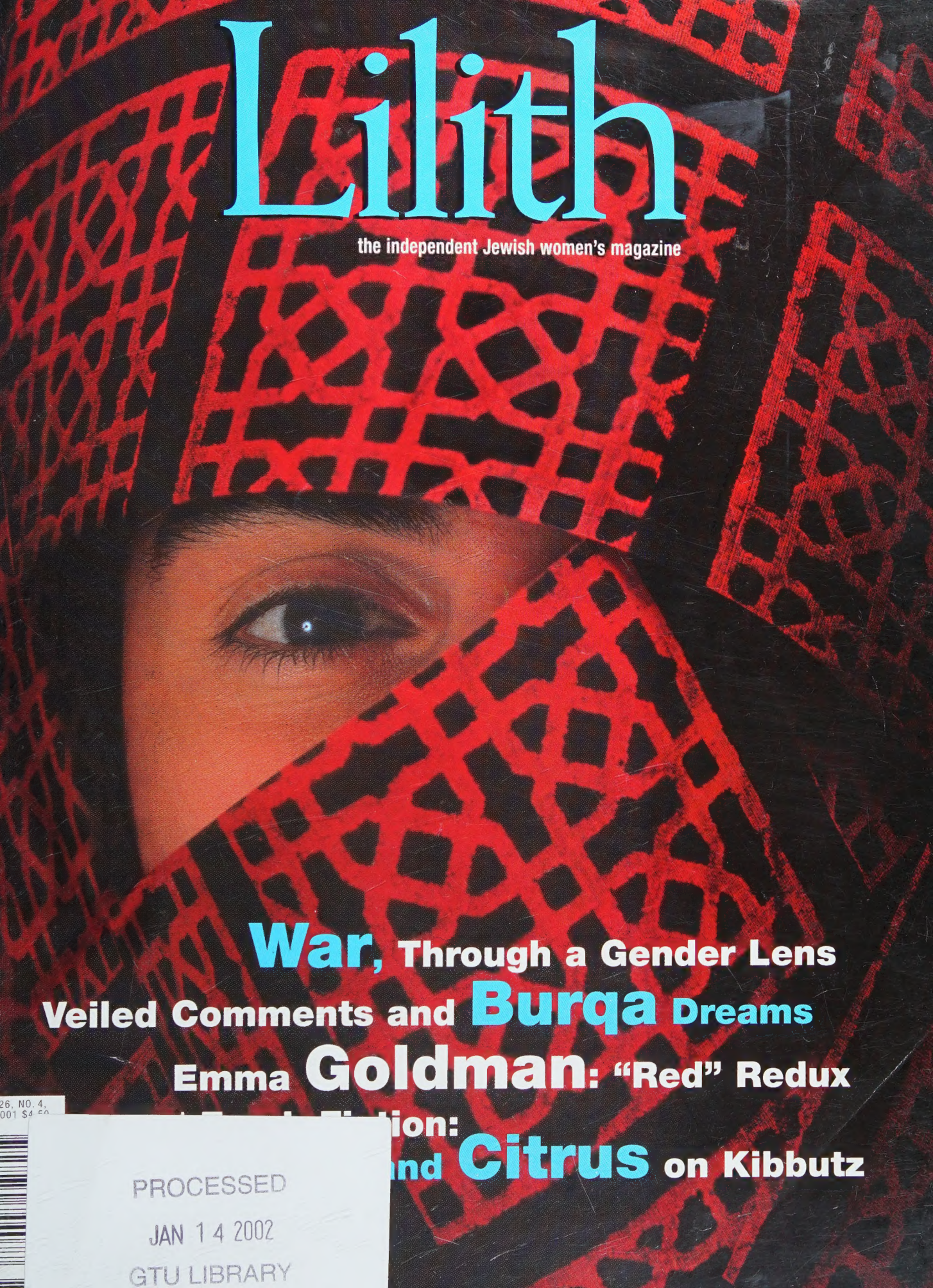
Lilith

the independent Jewish women's magazine



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Lilith

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In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple, the Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."
—from The Alphabet of Ben Sira, *23a-b*

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Women as poultry. We're used to the images: chick, bird, mother hen, old crow. And now, more soberly, more eerily: canary. This is the bird sent ahead of the workers in the coal mines. If she died, that meant poisonous gases escaping, a forewarning of grave danger, a sign to take action, the claxon to evacuate quickly.

When mainstream media in the West began to report on the plight of Afghan women after September 11, these grim reports were not news to people who had for months been learning of them on feminist websites. But because it was women who were, mostly, the ones affected by the confiscations of freedom in Afghanistan, hardly anybody noticed. Only a few alert souls understood that women's suffering was a harbinger of what would befall the whole planet. The erosion of women's rights should have been an immediate signal—a kind of Distant Early Warning line—that other freedoms would soon be under siege as well. But savvy journalist Tom Freidman announced on national television, in the thick of the West's revulsion at how women were treated under the Taliban, "We just weren't paying attention." In fact, women were the birds suffocating in treacherously dangerous mines (in this context, read burqas, or caves).

This issue of LILITH explores some of the ways we—as Jews, as women—respond to this world which had almost succeeded in cleansing itself of women, at least in public spaces.

In the wake of the cover story in the previous issue of LILITH—on the growing market for Jewish women's eggs for in-vitro fertilization—I've been hearing from a whole range of individuals about when—or even whether—Jewish women should have children. The ads in college papers offering up to $25,000 for the eggs of young Jewish women, the trigger to my article last fall, have opened up a discussion about fertility and its opposite.

"Why would I want to quit my job and have a kid now?" a married woman in her late twenties asked me last week. "Why are you defining pregnancy and childbearing as the default position, the norm?" challenged another. Obviously, whether or not to conceive is an utterly personal choice. But to be able choose intelligently, we've got to have the facts. These include an understanding, made even more clear to me in the conversations I've had since the article was published, that technology has a long way to go before women will be able to routinely conceive, and maintain a pregnancy, well into their forties. Despite all the much-trumpeted advances in reproductive science, it is still dramatically easier for most women to get pregnant and have a child before age 40.

Certainly not every woman has to—or should—become a mother. The young woman who railed against seeing pregnancy as the norm was right—we have struggled for decades as feminists not to have women valued for reproductive capacity alone. But for women who do want to have children, it's urgent that the facts emerge out of the hype.

I'm hearing the worries about increasing numbers of infertile "older" (that is, post-35) Jewish women not as part of some dreaded demographic dip for Jewish population as a whole, but as personal disappointment—even anguish—for the women involved. This is an evolution of sorts from the cries, heard in the 70s and 80s, about a shrinking Jewish population in North America. Now it's the needs of women themselves at center stage, not some abstraction of "the Jewish community."

I cannot believe I am still having to articulate this, but maybe each generation has to hear it anew: For women to consider having their children younger (and Jewish women, if they have children, have them later than the norm), they must have assurances that they won't have to choose (as men do not have to choose) between having a career and having a family. Community institutions do have an essential role to play here—in supporting with quality Jewish childcare the children who are being born. And publicizing this so that women who want to conceive aren't faced with one of a constricting number of choices—quitting work to care for the child or, if partnered, having one's partner do the same; re-jigging work schedules so that each partner works a shift of child care each day; hiring a private (and expensive) caregiver for the child; finding affordable and reliable group day care.

The solutions emerging—not because the Jewish community wants women to make more babies, but because women themselves are so uneasy over the specter of infertility—is for the Jewish community to help lessen the anxieties of people who want to become parents. The most direct way to help is by providing childcare supports. Women (and men) are not going to leave the workplace so readily, nor can many of them afford to, nor afford a private babysitter or nanny, nor would some choose

> When we talk about Jewish women having babies . . .

to ("Why would I want to hire a woman who must leave her own children in order to take care of mine? Many of us feel uneasy with those class and often racial issues," admitted a woman who says she'll wait until she's in her thirties before she and her husband consider having a child.)

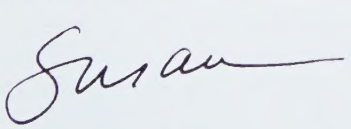
How about quality childcare, and enough of it in every underutilized Jewish building—synagogues, community centers, office buildings? I have to tell you that I choke to see that this need is surfacing—unmet—again! If young women should be encouraged to have their children in their relatively most fertile years, they have to be supported by a community taking childrearing seriously as a shared endeavor. And how about show-

casing men as well as women in parenting roles? Both these pretty obvious suggestions used to be put forth at least once a week when I first began lecturing across the country more than 20 years ago! Now that women have greater earning power than ever before, this may be the time to leverage some of this economic clout to encourage Jewish organizations to meet these needs.

And women's groups need to make sure that we aren't afraid of the facts. About how fertility for women diminishes significantly, year by year, between 25 and 40. Not all things are possible to us, or not without great personal and financial cost. Sometimes I hear that this sounds like a reversal of feminist gains. The facts, in this case, have no politics. One specialist in in-vitro fertilization at New York University Medical Center told me that when he posts statistics on his website about how difficult it is for women to "keep" a pregnancy after age 40, he is accused of being sexist, of wanting to keep women barefoot and pregnant. He counters: "the best cure for infertility is prevention."

There is other—hidden—political fallout from women's increasing infertility that few have recognized until now. The most stalwart soldiers in the marches for abortion rights have been women who themselves have had to terminate a pregnancy. But here's what I heard the last time I wrote in these pages about abortion rights: "Honestly, Susan, I believe in what you say, but for me and for most of the women I know," said a friend in her late thirties, "our biggest worry is not an unwanted pregnancy but just trying to *get* pregnant." With infertility anxiety so high on the agenda, the reproductive rights movement loses the attention of women who understand in their guts (or their wombs) what it is like to have an unwanted pregnancy and no way to terminate it.

The right wing is once again lobbying powerfully against a woman's right to choose. At the same time, Jewish women, once in the forefront of this movement, may now be more worried about their own fertility than over a threatened seizure of reproductive freedoms generally. However ardently we might support abortion rights and other reproductive freedoms intellectually and politically, unless there are women who understand in a quite personal way that safe and legal abortions must be safeguarded, there won't be the emotional energy to fuel a newly urgent abortion rights struggle.



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To contact LILITH:
250 W.57 St., # 2432, New York NY 10107
phone: (212) 757–0818 fax: (212) 757–5705
lilithmag@aol.com www.lilithmag.com

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Kol Ishah:
"The Voices of Women."

Traditionally, the **voice** of the Jewish woman was **not to be heard** in public, lest it arouse men. **No more.** These pages are for news about Jewish women, **in our own strong voices.**

"KNEE-JERK FEMINIST"

When **Judy Yudof** was recently chosen as the first woman president of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, she assured The Forward in an interview that she wasn't "a knee-jerk feminist." "I never wanted my gender to be the reason for getting anything, and I don't think it ever was," she told the newspaper.

Her statement infuriated **Susan Sapiro**, who is on the staff of Ma'yan: The Jewish Women's Project.

"While I am sure that Ms. Yudof was chosen for this prestigious position on her own merits," Sapiro wrote in a personal e-mail that she circulated among feminist colleagues and friends, "she wouldn't have even HAD her merits considered were it not for the work of 'knee-jerk feminists' in the Jewish community and in North American society." Sapiro was speaking for herself, she told LILITH, not for Ma'yan.

Feminist Chanteuse

From chanteuse in the '50s, to feminist cantata composer and performer in the '70s, to composer and lyricist of a spooky post-Holocaust operetta in the '80s, **Mira J. Spektor** has lived multiple musical lives.

Today, she continues to compose—new CDs of some of her work have just been released—something she feared she would be unable to do after her husband's death three years ago. Spektor works at her grand piano overlooking the Central Park Reservoir in one of New York's fine old Central Park West apartments. When we met, she was wearing a blue muumuu, feet bare, toenails painted red, glasses pushed back on her head. By her side was the passionate Pekinese, Figaro ("Figgy the Piggy, as in male chauvinist pig").

On her new CD "Lady of the Castle," Spektor's chamber opera tells the story of a young Jewish woman held captive during World War II by a count who both protects and imprisons her.

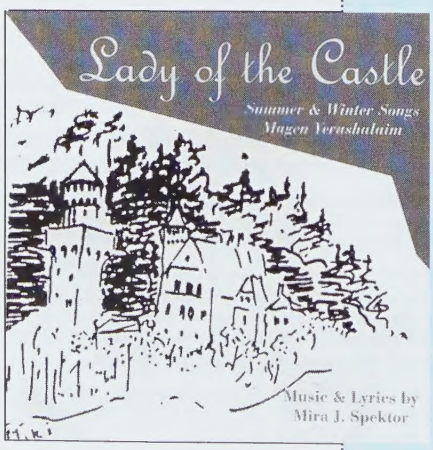
Born in Berlin, Spektor lived in France during her early childhood, where she spent summers with Mama at the Deauville casino's summer matinees, eating ice cream and listening to Edith Piaf and Maurice Chevalier. Her family left Europe for the U.S. in 1939, and Spektor wrote her first musical when she was a high school senior in New York. She became a chanteuse, she says, at Sarah Lawrence College.

Her long-standing feminist claim to fame is the music for "The Housewives' Cantata," with lyrics by **June Siegel**. Written in 1973, the year of Ms. magazine's first issue, the drama is pointed but not barbed. "Nora" (an allusion to Ibsen's "Doll's House"?) finally finds fulfillment as the first woman president of the United States. Spektor sings the title role on the original cast album, now reissued on CD. Her music ranges from the jazzy "Dirty Dish Rag" to the 1960s ballad sound of "Song of the Bourgeoise (sic) Hippie." Spektor's daughter, Charline, wrote the words for the romantic "Early Morning Rain." As Spektor tells it, "It was raining. She was kvetching. I told her, 'Why don't you write me some lyrics.'"

The young Mira Spektor is the charming chanteuse of "Mira Chante" (Mira Sings), a remastered collection of songs recorded from 1955 to 1975. Spektor's voice is sweet and sexy. "Je suis belle, cheri," one of the two songs on the CD that she composed, is about a happy newlywed ("I am beautiful, my love, because you say so, and my heart struts in a parade").

Spektor is currently arranging performances for the Aviva Players, the ensemble she founded in 1975 to research and perform the music of women composers from the 18th Century to the present. And she's working on recording two new CDs. In "Ladies of Romance," she wrote the music to existing librettos about famous women, including Lizzie Borden and Mary Shelley. "Give Me Time," with lyrics by "Housewives" collaborator June Siegel, is a 17-minute musical about a "mature couple."

AMY STONE



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- *Mira Chante. French Love Songs.*
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All CDs available from Tower Records or $15 + $3 postage from Original Cast Records (888)627-3993. P.O. Box 496, Georgetown, CT 06829. For additional information: Mira J. Spektor (212)362-2277.

The Rabbi Defends the Pediatrician

He was perfect: self-assured, with sterling credentials, and generations of adoring mothers entrusted their children to him. He was active in his community, and in his Reform synagogue. So when the New York State Health Department last December revoked the license of **Dr. Stuart Copperman**, 66, after an investigation revealed that he had sexually molested six female patients, the affluent Long Island community where he had practiced pediatrics for 35 years went into convulsions, followed by denial.

Over and over again, people in Merrick, New York, where Dr. Copperman had his in-house office, said that they couldn't believe that the good doctor, whom many described as "like a god," had committed the hideous acts of which he was accused. One woman, who said she had known the doctor and his family for years, speculated that the young women who testified were all pathological liars. Six former patients, now adults, had testified to a state panel in the summer of 2000 that Dr. Copperman had molested them when they were teenagers. Their allegations of the abuse were strikingly similar, and graphic: the doctor, after telling their mothers that he wanted to talk to their daughters in private, would then perform a "vaginal cleaning" with his bare fingers. Moreover, after the story hit the media, dozens of additional women came forward with testimony, both to the media and to the State Health Department. **Debra Geller Lieberman**, 39, said that the doctor had molested her three times, when she was 8, 9, and 10. Lieberman's father, also a doctor, was a colleague of Dr. Copperman. But, said Lieberman, when she later complained to her mother, the response she got was "a nice Jewish doctor from Long Island just doesn't do things like that."

Dr. Copperman has not to date been accused of a crime, although the Nassau County District Attorney continues to investigate the case. Revocation of his medical license was done under the state's administrative law, which states that he can seek to reclaim it after three years.

Shortly after the story broke in Long Island *Newsday* last December, **Rabbi Ronald Brown**, rabbi of Dr. Copperman's synagogue, Temple Beth Am of Merrick, where the doctor was a generous donor, wrote a letter to the local paper stating that the pediatrician "was a caring person and a dedicated physician," that he had known the doctor for years, that the doctor had taken care of the rabbi's own children, and that Dr. Copperman was "a person to whom I can entrust the care of those I love."

And while this public support of Dr. Copperman made many congregants angry, the rabbi did not retract his letter. One woman, who did not want to be identified, said that "the rabbi is still the rabbi, and you have to forgive him. Rabbi Brown didn't know all the facts."

Reporting this story for The New York Times this past September reminded me how risky it is for a woman to tell the truth, especially when she is going up against powerful men like the rabbi and the pediatrician. Nearly everybody I interviewed for the story later expressed regret for having commented on the case. A woman from the congregation who had agreed to be quoted called a few days later, her voice shaking with anger, as she accused me of "trying to embarrass our temple." Then another woman whom I had interviewed, whose daughter had been the first victim to come forward, screamed at me over the telephone after the Times article ran for supposedly "whitewashing" the doctor. Never again, she told me, would she speak to a reporter. I told her that however much she hated the way I had told the story, she had done the world a service by talking to me. How else would the victims' voices have been heard?

ALICE SPARBERG ALEXIOU

TEMPLE BETH AM
THE REFORM JEWISH CONGREGATION

Congregant in Scandal Shakes Up Temple

By ALICE SPARBERG ALEXIOU

A force in a community is now under a cloud.

Women and Jewish Meditation

"Coming to New York is a little like making a shiva call." These are the words of **Sheila Peltz Weinberg**, rabbi of the Jewish Community of Amherst (Massachusetts), speaking on November 11 at a Jewish meditation conference in New York City. She explained, "When we practice mindfulness, the quality of attending moment to moment, we are getting ready to be in the house of sorrow . . . The trick in paying a *shiva* call or in meditation—perhaps the trick in life—is to be calm and alert." She also pointed out that September 11, like other days of calamity, can be identified just by its date, like Tisha B'Av.

Women played major roles throughout the four-day conference on "Jewish Meditation: The Next Steps," sponsored by Elat Chayyim, the Jewish spiritual retreat center in Accord, N.Y. As a relatively new aspect of mainstream Judaism, Jewish meditation has no entrenched male establishment, and women, many but not all of them rabbis, are clearly active as movement leaders.

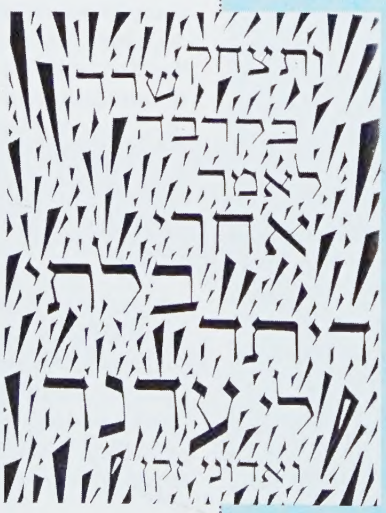
kol ishah

AN ISRAELI WOMAN WILL NOT SHUT UP

IsraelNationalNews.com. reported that when a Montreal synagogue received a letter from an Islamic organization that stated *"Death to the Jews, this letter contains anthrax. Death to Israel. Islam marches forward,"* the Jewish community tried to keep it quiet. But **Esti Mayer**, an Israeli living in Montreal, informed Israel Radio. Israelis, she said, do not keep threats quiet.

OLD GIRLS' NETWORK

Last January, Israeli women who work in high-tech set up their own branch of the womens' international networking organization "DigitalEve," which has more than 20 branches worldwide, The Jerusalem Post reported in October. So far "DigitalEve" in Israel has about 160 members. The Post noted that women in Israel especially need to form their own networks, because most of the power players in high-tech originated from army intelligence units, the old-boys' network par excellence, a fact that effectively shuts women out of the loop.



This passage is read during Rosh HaShanah: "And Sarah said, 'After I am spent, will there still be pleasure for me? And my man is old." One of a series of posters interpreting Biblical quotes by or about women, by **Harriet Finck.** harfin50@aol.com

Orthodoxy and Women: Not Egalitarian But A Step In The Right Direction...

Feminists from every segment of the Jewish community are continuing to fight the good fight for women's fuller participation. But Orthodox interpretations of *halakha*—Jewish law—can make the struggle particularly difficult for Orthodox women. Still, Orthodox feminists are coming up with new halakhic paradigms for women's participation in Orthodox Judaism.

Increased opportunities for Orthodox women's religious participation have come unexpectedly from the World Trade Center disaster. The New York Times reported that nine young women from Stern College of Yeshiva University have joined other volunteers in sitting *shmira*—the ritual of keeping watch over the dead until they are buried—at the New York City Medical Examiner's office, where the remains of victims have been transported. The women have the blessings of Yeshiva president **Dr. Norman Lamm**, who, according to The Times, "agreed without hesitation that the normal gender rules—women can sit *shmira* only for other women, while men can sit for any deceased person—could be waived under the circumstances."

In addition, The Drisha Institute, a non-denominational, "culturally Orthodox" New York institution that provides women with the opportunity to study Jewish texts on an advanced level, held an innovative service this past High Holiday season. Along with the traditional service led by men, Drisha sponsored another service, for women and men, in which women led the *P'sukei D'Zimra* prayers and participated fully in the Torah reading. According to some Orthodox interpretations—such as one published in the on-line Edah journal—women's participation in these sections of the service does not go against Jewish law.

The Drisha service was "not egalitarian, but it's an important move in the right direction," said **Rabbi David Silber**, dean of Drisha, adding that increased women's participation benefits everyone. "If more people feel that they have a stake in it [prayer], they participate more. It raises the level of prayer for everyone."

Rabbi Silber has not received any direct negative responses to the inclusive prayer services, although he has heard that there has been "some controversy"—presumably from people who oppose these changes on halakhic grounds, or simply because they alter the customs of the Orthodox prayer service. But mostly, said Rabbi Silber, the response has been to say "Thank you."

In another development, the Orthodox Caucus—an organization dedicated to finding "new strategies for dealing with issues confronting halakhic Judaism in contemporary society"—is sponsoring a scholarship to support the education of *Yoatzot Halakha*, female experts in the laws of sexuality and fertility. Recipients of this scholarship will go to Israel for an intense course of study that includes an examination of the relevant laws, as well as supplementary studies in gynecology, fertility, and sexuality. Afterwards, they will return to the US to work as advisors to women about the laws of married sex, and to promote the idea that women can give Jewish legal advice in this capacity. **Laurie Novick**, the first recipient of this funding, is currently training in Israel.

In Israel, a "Halakhic Advisory Hotline," where women ask female advisors about menstruation, sex and fertility, has already been functioning for a year.

"Orthodox women will, we feel, benefit tremendously from the opportunity to turn to a woman with questions of a sensitive nature," says **Dr. Giti Bendheim**, co-chair of the Orthodox Caucus' Task Force on Women and Orthodoxy. She says female advisors will "ease the way" for many observant women, who may be reluctant to discuss matters of sexuality with male rabbis.

Despite the fact that the *Yoetzet Halacha* position falls safely within the boundaries of Jewish law, not everyone is applauding the change.

"I have heard that, for some people, this [having female advisors] infringes on the relationship between a Rav and those who should be turning to him for religious advice and questions," says Bendheim. "There are others who feel that rabbis' wives have been answering these questions from time immemorial, and that this unofficial channel worked perfectly well." She adds, however, that *Yoatzot Halakha* are exhaustively educated in these subjects in a way that rabbis' wives have not necessarily been, and that this expertise derives from their own, and not their husband's thorough knowledge.

RACHEL KRANSON

TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO a *Yoetzet Halakha*, call the "International Halakhic Advisory Hotline." In Israel: (02) 642-0102 Outside of Israel: 972-2-642-0102

Debby Hirshman: The Woman Behind America's Biggest JCC

The striking new glass, steel and Jerusalem-stone building at 76th Street and Amsterdam Avenue on Manhattan's Upper West Side houses state-of-the-art sports facilities as well as a *beit midrash* (traditional house of study). Also a kosher dairy café, computerized listings of Jewish resources throughout the city, and a Judaica shop run in cooperation with the Jewish Museum. And for those who incorporate Zen into their Judaism, there is a meditation area.

This remarkable new Jewish Community Center in Manhattan—"Doors Wide Open in January 2002" as its big outdoor sign reads—has come to life under the direction of **Debby Hirshman**, 48, with a $70-million capital campaign that makes it the most expensive JCC ever built. Hired as executive director of the then-nascent JCC of the Upper West Side in 1990, which deliberately operated without a building, using borrowed facilities, Hirshman has shaped this JCC, now the biggest in America, with the determination she showed back in her student days at Barnard College as captain of the basketball team.

Hirshman grew up playing football with the boys, but when her mother died when Hirshman was 10, she also took on traditional female responsibilities, calling the butcher before going to school in the morning, and then waiting up at night for her older brothers to come home.

At the JCC, Hirshman early on accomplished the seemingly impossible feat of involving all 17 Upper West Side synagogues, ranging from Orthodox to Reform, in her plans. She has brought in more than 80 members to the board, which includes people of all ages, income levels, religious involvement and non-involvement, gay and straight, with a near-even division of men and women. Together, Hirshman and the board hammered out compromises on difficult issues, like offering gay and lesbian programming, and opening the JCC for some programs on Saturday afternoons.

There have, however, been rough spots. When the board changed the name "JCC on the Upper West Side" to the "JCC in Manhattan," last spring, all hell broke loose.

kol ishah

TO SERVE OR NOT TO SERVE

A listserve hosted by Bridges, a journal for "Jewish feminists and their friends" that has about 400 subscribers, is a forum for, among other topics, promoting peace activism in Israel, which many find controversial. This past summer, when the discussion turned contentious, moderator **Clare Kinberg** suspended the list for a month and a half.

It all started with a posting about a *yizkor* [memorial] book that a list member was compiling containing the names of the Israeli Jews who had died in the past year as a result of the violence. When another participant responded that it was only fair for the names of Palestinians who have been killed to also be included, tempers began to flare. "Do you think I'm breaking some sportsman's rule by crying for Jews who have been killed?" one woman demanded. Another writer said that she was "appalled by the Jewish denial of Israel's rights." And another called members of the list "self-hating Jews who are quick to rush to yell about 'Israeli atrocities' but who conveniently forget about the Jews who were brutally murdered."

When Kinberg reopened the list in September, she said that for those whose main reason for participating was to argue against information about the Israeli peace movement, "I hope you will unsub yourself."

kol ishah

AND SPEAKING OF LISTS—IS THREE A TREND?

In this communications revolution, some Jewish women are using e-mail to construct a kind of informal media-cum-public opinion watch. **Talia Carner**, an Israeli-born writer on Long Island, (*WordFairy10@aol.com*) started a list after the most recent Intifada began in September 2000. Carner, who describes her political position as "in the middle," says she spends up to three hours a day, scanning different sites and collecting articles. She sends out between three and five articles a day, to a list that now totals a few hundred people. She does not, she said, distribute any material that advocates "extreme positions." Novelist and commentator **Naomi Ragen**, who lives in Israel, also maintains a list as well as a web site (*www.naomiragen.com; Naomi@NaomiRagen.com*). She sends recipients her own columns, some of which appear in the Jerusalem Post and other newspapers. **Maxine Elkins**, of Princeton, N.J., also maintains a list, which she, like Carner, started a year ago, in her words, "after the Palestinian terrorism war."

"As a Jewish woman committed to Israel, I could not just sit on all these e-mails I was getting," Elkins said. "I had to forward them." Her list at present contains about 200 names. Elkins, however, prefers not to publish her e-mail address. The reason? "Some of her messages," she said, "are activist." For example, she circulated a petition to the Nobel committee, to take away Arafat's peace prize. "My list," she said, "is private among people of my own choosing."

Dr. Ruth Westheimer, the no-nonsense sex therapist who is president of the YM & YWHA of Washington Heights & Inwood on New York's uppermost Upper West Side, along with **Martin Englisher,** executive vice president of the Y, asked the JCC to cease and desist immediately from using the name "JCC in Manhattan." Hirshman's reaction: "We mishandled it in not communicating in advance." She also makes the point: "Our competition is not each other. Our competition comes from all the secular institutions competing for the time, the philanthropic resources of our Jewish community."

But for all Hirshman's fierce commitment to her job, she makes it clear that her daughter **Elisheva,** now a college student, whom she's raised on her own since she was 18 months old, comes first. Hirshman once interrupted a fundraising meeting to speak to her daughter on the phone. And, yes, she raised the million dollars that she was seeking.

A.S.

"Trembling Before G-d"

"Trembling Before G-d," the groundbreaking film by **Sandi Simcha DuBowski** documents the lives of Orthodox and Hasidic gay and lesbian Jews, who both struggle against and give in to the fierce pull of their religious world.

In one of the most poignant segments of the film, **"Malka"** and **"Leah,"** a couple who met at their ultra-orthodox Bais Yaakov high school, carve out a place for their sexual and emotional commitments within Orthodoxy. "I'm trying to do as many mitzvos as I can so there can be a place for us in Olam Habah [the next world] together," says "Malka." Their lives are structured not only by the obligation and desire to perform mitzvot but by a profound belief in a God who hears and answers them.

Also featured in the film is Big Knish Tours leader Israel, from Brooklyn. Israel rejects his former Orthodox life entirely; instead, he finds community and family ties within the secular gay world. But he is still in pain and in dialogue with the world that rejected him.

The most painful scenes are those shot in silhouette, to disguise identities, of homosexual Hasidic men and women trapped in heterosexual marriages, yearning for an intimacy and love they cannot have.

Understandibly, "Trembling Before G-d" has won awards at Sundance and at other film festivals in Berlin, Jerusalem and Los Angeles. This fall, it played to sell-out crowds in New York, breaking box office records at the Film Forum for opening day ticket sales.

"Trembling" challenges the Orthodox world to a communal *heshbon nefesh*, a spiritual accounting, to reevaluate whether halakhic norms have become an excuse for social prejudice. The film asks liberal Jews, gay and lesbian audiences, and others to wrestle with a different question: what makes these brave and often lonely souls want to remain within this uncompromising community? Why speak to a rabbi who will at best advise celibacy, when one could seek out from a liberal or even a gay rabbi—or no rabbi at all—and find acceptance?

If "Trembling" had done only the important work of exposing the heretofore unrecorded lives of gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews, *dayenu*. But "Trembling" goes far beyond that, giving non-Orthodox viewers a sense of the force and embrace of that community, the loss of which offers liberation to some but an empty void to others.

For those Orthodox gays and lesbians who have not made the break, being observant and a practicing homosexual means placing Leviticus 20:13 ("A man who lies with a man as with a woman, both of them have done an abomination and shall be put to death") in dialogue with the words said every morning: "My God, the soul you placed within me is pure." Queer Orthodox Jews do not get stuck in this contradiction; instead, they use the ancient technique of Midrash to let these texts have meaning in their lives. Revolution may come from these Jews saying, as does the first openly gay Orthodox rabbi Steve Greenberg, "There are other ways to read the Torah. Let's learn."

RESOURCES FOR GAY AND lesbian Orthodox Jews can be found through the Orthodykes (www.orthodykesny.org), the Gay and Lesbian Yeshiva Day School Alumni Association (www.glydsa.org), Parents and Friends of Orthodox Gays and Lesbians (www.pfogl.org), and the film's website, www.tremblingbeforeg-d.org.

MARA BENJAMIN

LILITH As Textbook

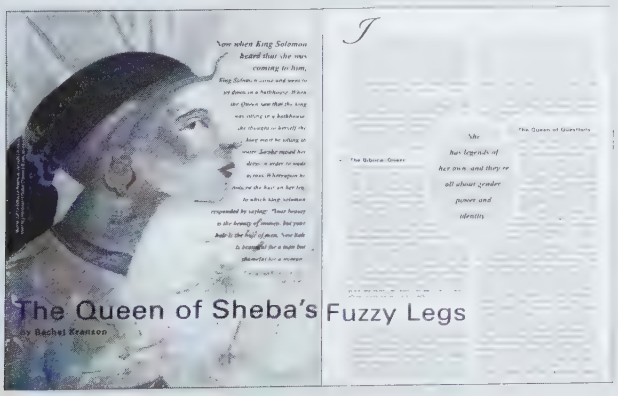
This fall, The High School of Jewish Studies in suburban Buffalo offered a new course with the riveting title "Lilith as Cover Girl." **Cantor Barbara Ostfeld**, who created the course, said that her inspiration came from LILITH's Spring 2001 cover "Boobs! How Jewish Women Feel About Their Breasts."

"I wanted a course to oppose the insidious quality of girls' magazines, that infuse young women with the idea that they need all kinds of gimmickry, like breast-enhancing creams, in order to be successful," Ostfeld said. The 'Boobs' issue was my catalyst. When it arrived in the mail, I thought, what a great juxtaposition!" The high school's course catalog publishes this as part of the description: "The point will be to see how popular culture's ideal woman measures up to her funky, brainy Jewish sister."

Among Ostfeld's students is her own teenage daughter. In the first lesson, Ostfeld used **Rachel Kranson**'s article from the Spring 2001 issue, "The Queen of Sheba's Fuzzy Legs," to segue into a discussion about female sexuality and modesty. In contrast to the message of Kranson's piece, Ostfeld brought in depilatory ads culled from young women's magazines.

"I told the girls that the purpose of pubic and underarm hair is to attract, not repel." Ostfeld used the Fall 2001 cover story about Jewish women's eggs to discuss views of infertility in Judaism.

A.S.A



WANT TO CREATE A COURSE for teen girls (or adults), using material in LILITH? The magazine's editors can help with consultations, sharing resources, suggesting lecturers and creating study guides for teachers and/or students. Call (212) 757-0818 or contact us at Lilithmag@aol.com

kol ishah

WHO ARE THESE WOMEN, ANYWAY?

"Jewish women and girls" began the tiny ad at the bottom of the New York Times' front page, looking at first like the Lubavitch-sponsored ads which for years appeared every Friday in this same spot to remind females of Shabbat candle-lighting times. But the ad appearing on the Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur this year continued thus:

"Hold your community accountable. Sexism is a sin."

The ad was signed "Jewish Women Watching," the anonymous grassroots organization that monitors persistent male chauvinism in Jewish organizations. While JWW members and funders have up to now remained underground, you can reach them via e-mail (*jewishwomenwatching@hotmail.com*).

Other recent JWW tactics have included sending out 1,500 Purim groggers to Jewish community leaders, to which stickers were affixed that read "Drown Out Sexism." And they suggest that, when you see women grotesquely underrepresented on the podium at Jewish conferences, you ask the men on that dais "How do you feel about the exclusion of your female colleagues? And what is your organization doing to rectify this situation?"

SELECTIONS FROM NOGA.

Hear Israeli women's views directly from their own feminist publication, Noga. These summaries, prepared and translated by Dana Hercbergs, are from Noga's Spring 2001 issue.

"She Was a Mother and a Sister to Us" A tribute to American feminist activist Virginia Snitow

On October 16, 2000, Virginia Snitow, founder of U.S./Israel Women-to-Women, died at 89. Years before "feminism" became a common term, Snitow supported grassroots women organizing for political action. An advocate for human and workers' rights, she lobbied for peace and against nuclear proliferation. She was dedicated to the feminist movement and reached out to leftist movements in Israel as well.

In 1931, Snitow began teaching at a high school for girls in Harlem, witnessing the suffering of African-American families. In a 1942 article "I Teach Black Girls," Snitow described her years in Harlem, claimed that a Eurocentric curriculum failed her African-American girls, and called for a more diversified curriculum.

This experience led her to dedicate herself to the civil rights movement of the 1960s and strengthened her belief in a connection between the Jewish and African-American struggle. Following a conversation with civil rights leader James Farmer, she joined the 1965 Montgomery, Alabama march.

Snitow helped enlist efforts against the use of nuclear weapons. Her 1958 article "The Mushroom Cloud" described the dangers of nuclear energy. From 1964 to 1972 Snitow served as president of the Women's Division of American Jewish Congress, convincing the AJC to become the first Jewish organization to condemn the Vietnam War. Her inspired leadership transformed the Division into one of the most influential voices of Jewish women.

In 1977 Snitow met Susan Weidman Schneider, a founder and the editor in chief of Lilith, who told her that the first shelter for battered women in Israel was facing closure for lack of rent money. Without hesitation, Snitow convened a group of friends, and immediately collected the necessary funds; thus was born the organization U.S./Israel Women-to-Women. During the 13 years of Snitow's leadership, the organization supported a network of over 200 community projects-among them shelters and centers for sexual abuse victims and health centers for women-empowering Jewish, Arab, Bedouin and Druze women, as well as women immigrants from Russia and Ethiopia. A Virginia Snitow lecture series was established in every Israeli university to educate the public, political leaders, professionals and women's organizations on women's issues.

Noga was one of the first projects supported by the group founded by Snitow. Noga's editors write, "We saw in her a mother as well as a sister." Said Jewel Bellush, who today leads U.S. / Israel Women-to-Women: "She was a Jewish Eleanor Roosevelt."

This page is brought to you with the generous support of George and Mildred Weissman and the Weissman Family Foundation.
Noga is edited by Rachel Ostrowitz, Mira Ariel, Rachel Giora, Erella Daor and Miri Krasin.

Women on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Israeli and Palestinian women add their voices to the media coverage, which often portrays only men—shooting, throwing stones and making pronouncements. Generally, women and their struggles for peace are ignored and undocumented, reports Noga. The statements speak of women's pain and frustration, and of a determination to build a promising future shaped by their active participation.

Netta Golan, a therapist and Jewish peace activist from Tel Aviv:

The myth of Israelis' superiority over Arabs succeeded in rooting itself in me as in all the children of Israel. After several years, in the first women's dialogue group between Israelis, Jews and Palestinians that I participated in, I exposed this internalized myth before my Palestinian counterparts. This was extremely difficult, but I knew that if I really wanted to examine my beliefs, I had to put them on the table. I told them that deep down I believed that they were more cruel and more violent than us, that if the Arabs defeated us in a war, they would kill all the Jews. The shock on their faces spoke more than words. They said that for a long time Jews had lived in Palestine, and that before it was clear that the Jews wanted to control Palestine, relations between the sides were good. In their opinion, if Arabs would win such a war they would let us continue to live here. My fears did not abate at the sound of these words, but listening to the two perspectives widened our capacity to understand one another.

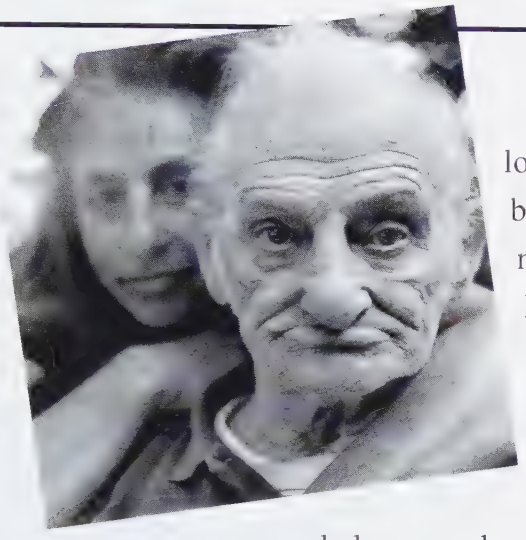
From a position paper of The Women Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, a Palestinian group in the Occupied Territories:

Palestinian women also mourn the death of their children. The most worrisome viewpoint in Israeli media-propaganda against the Palestinian insurgence is its attack on Palestinian women, blaming them for sending their children to die. This blame is superficially supported by video clips showing Palestinian women protesting at their sons' funerals, appearing as if they refuse to mourn, and as if they are "celebrating" the deaths. But this picture neglects to take into account all the factors, fails to delve to the depths of the local culture and refuses to understand what these mothers go through psychologically, emotionally and socially. This depiction is constructed to render these Palestinian women into devils and not people, and fits into the wider propaganda that presents the Palestinians as irrational, vengeful and inhuman.

These Palestinian mothers are human beings, and like all mothers they don't want to witness their children's murder. Finding comfort in the thought that their child is in a better place, that he died for a purpose, or even that it is appropriate to avenge his death with the blood of the enemy could ease the pain, but it could never fill the missing space in their homes, or heal the wound in their hearts.

SECRETS IN THE MATZAH BOX

BY PAULA WOLFSON



Photograph by Lloyd Wolf

Paula and Harry Wolfson

After the death of a lifelong friend, my aged father became depressed and paranoid. He thought the IRS and FBI were out to get him for tax evasion. Just the sight of the security patrols made Dad panic. At first my sister and I believed that Dad just needed a good psychiatrist and medication. Despite these interventions, my father became a prisoner in his own home. A retired union activist and featherweight boxer, he rarely left his apartment in the Leisure World Compound of Seal Beach, California. He ate little. He lost weight. He refused to go to the store, the post office or the bank. In 1999 my sister Ellen took our father to live with her. After he left I cleaned out his dingy one bedroom apartment. The task at hand was not easy. I did not like the child-parent role reversal and the transition taking place in my life.

A Red-Diaper Daughter's Memoir

It took only a few hours to clean out my dad's tiny apartment. He had very few possessions. As I folded Dad's shirts I remembered the day in September of 1971 when my parents drove me to Santa Barbara, to start my first year of college. The University of California at Santa Barbara was the place where anti-Vietnam War demonstrators burned down a branch of the Bank of America. For a Red Diaper baby this was interesting news. However, for the entire two hour drive I was sobbing tears of grief over the loss of childhood. At one point Dad pulled the car off the Los Angeles freeway and sweetly said, "Honey, we won't change a thing in your room." Unfortunately, I could not make that same promise to him.

My partner, Lloyd Wolf, gently searched Dad's upper hallway cabinets and found dusty Shabbat can-

Out of the box came creased and faded documents, evidence of my father's radical youth, when the FBI really *was* out to get him.

dles, a gold yarmulke, a tin menorah still laced in blue wax and, surprising in a hall closet, an empty matzah box. I almost threw it away but Lloyd—God bless him—reached inside. He did not come up empty handed.

Out of the pink matzah box came creased black and white photos and torn faded documents. These were evidence of my father's radical youth, when the FBI really was out to get him.

Harry Wolfson was born in 1918 in Fall River, Massachusetts. His Orthodox parents Pincus and Mary (an arranged match) had eight children. Grandpa Pincus sold fruit from a horse drawn cart. Dad joked about living below the poverty line. "My six sisters took turns going outside because they had only one dress to share among them."

During the Depression Dad joined a select group of specialized movers. They retrieved furniture from the sidewalks as families were evicted by their landlords. Then when the goons left, my Dad and his team quickly dashed all of it back inside the homes. Dad served in the army during WWII and returned to New York a soldier in the fight for social justice. Someone had given him articles by Karl Marx while aboard the aircraft carrier that was carrying the troops home. He returned to New York a changed man. Dad joined the American Youth for Democracy and met Rhoda Shea, his future wife, at a meeting. My parents left their honeymoon early to demonstrate for the creation of the State of Israel.

Their son Joe was born on July 11th, 1949. The hospital arranged for a *mohel*. My mother was anxious to meet him, have the ceremony and get Joe's circumcision over and done with. The *mohel* arrived a half hour early, a tall man in a black suit, carrying a large briefcase. In one breathless swoop my mother sat the *mohel* down, served coffee, and then asked, "What do you need to know about us?" He replied, "Who lives in this house?" She gave him the names. He then asked, "Do you have a relative who works at the Brooklyn Naval Ship Yard?" My mother was momentarily confused and then flushed with anger. The man flipped open his wallet, flashed his FBI badge and said, "Hey lady, you didn't give me a chance to introduce myself." My mother remembers that the family "threw the bum out." Afterwards my parents assumed that the agent was investigating their signatures on a petition to ban the A-bomb.

For the next two years my parents lived underground. Their mission was to house and protect a mimeograph machine since many members of "the movement leadership" were being detained and arrested. Dad was so anxious about breaking the mimeograph that he seldom took it out of the box. According to my mother, "The mimeograph was given to the staff at the Daily Worker and later (ironically) confiscated in a raid by the IRS."

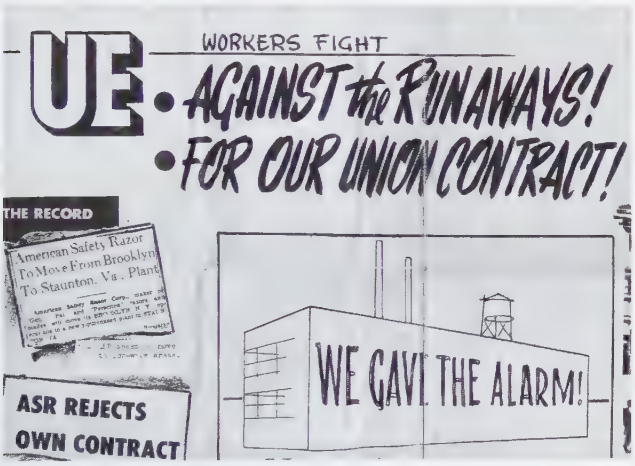
My parents were again living "above ground" by the time I was born in 1953. They named me Paula Ethel in honor of actor and activist Paul Robeson and loyal housewife and convicted spy Ethel Rosenberg. My pregnant mother had sat near Ethel Rosenberg's mother on a train car filled with demonstrators going to Washington DC in an attempt to stay the Rosenberg execution.

In 1954 I witnessed my first labor march from the front row seat of a baby buggy, when Harry and

Rhoda Wolfson and her children, United Electrical Worker's Union Strike

Rhoda helped organize a sit-in for the United Electrical Workers Union. My mother walked the picket line, carrying a sign in one hand and pushing a baby stroller with the other. When the bosses moved the factory south, the union was smashed. My Dad and hundreds of workers were left unemployed. A friend stopped by our house to say he was relocating his family to California, where there were jobs.

Our family, along with many other radicals from Brooklyn, moved in 1957 to Long Beach, California. It was paradise. Palm trees. Orange groves. A two car garage! Dad found work installing floors and my mother became a secretary at the Long Beach Jewish Community Center. My brother Joe became a top ranked surfer while the rest of us continued pounding pavement to support striking farm workers, to liberate Angela Davis, to stop the war, and to support the Womens' Movement. However, not all was peaceful in sunny California. Tall men in gray suits frequently pounded on our front door. My father did not let


UE
WORKERS FIGHT
• AGAINST the RUNAWAYS!
• FOR OUR UNION CONTRACT!
THE RECORD
American Safety Razor To Move From Brooklyn To Staunton, Va., Plant
ASR REJECTS OWN CONTRACT
WE GAVE THE ALARM!

1958

them in. He would crack the door open and yell, "I'm not talking to you. So, get a lawyer!" (For years I thought these were Bible salesman and couldn't understand why my father wanted them to get a lawyer.)

After all three children left home for college the center fell out from my parent's marriage. Their relationship burnt out as the self-help movement spread like wild fire through California. Dad volunteered as a stop-smoking facilitator and my mother smoked. They had "communication and identity" issues. She resented his searching her purse for cigarettes. She called him a "fanatic." He had difficulty adjusting to her new friends from the women's group. He attended therapy sessions at a nudist colony and she took a degree in Jewish studies. After their split, my mother got a better

On strike, 1954

paying job and a female partner. And my father never recovered from their divorce.

Dad was unable to create a new life for himself. He bought cowboy attire and went country line dancing, but couldn't relate to the other dancers once the music stopped. Mostly he withdrew from the world. And then the panic attacks began. The medication helped control his anxiety but my Dad was never the same again. In his later years he must have stashed his early memories away in that empty matzah box, just in case the FBI came knocking on his Leisure World door.

I had never seen these images before, a generation of memories. Photos of my parents on their honeymoon, of Dad in the army and on strike. A faded, torn document from the pile turned out to be the front page of the 1954 Brooklyn Eagle newspaper. It features a photo of my mother on a picket line, carrying a sign that says, "Don't Come Home Without A Contract." For me, these newly found photos create a quiet testament to the days when my parent's marital union stood strong and we had a wonderful family life.

Sadly, my parents now do not speak or see one another. Yet their legacy continues in the values that they have jointly taught their children.

Sometimes a matzah box is many things at once. It can be half empty or half full, a reminder of the bitter and the sweet in life; exile, liberation and that never-ending journey to a promised land. For my father a matzah box provided the safe haven that he never really found in life.

In 1976 I moved to Washington DC to intern at the Institute for National Security Studies, an organization concerned with the abuse of government agencies spying on citizens. Now I store my father's documents in my home, just a few miles from FBI headquarters.

PAULA WOLFSON is the co-author, with photographer Lloyd Wolf, of *Jewish Mothers: Strength Wisdom Compassion*. They are now working on a book about Jewish Fathers.

What Does Afghan Women's Suffering Say to Us?

LILITH recently spoke to women with intimate experience of life under the burqa. Being both Jewish and female, we found that the knowledge of Afghan women's suffering pierced our hearts in some singular ways.

As women, we understand that males who brazenly advertise how they victimize us are at the same time broadcasting, though it hardly seems possible, even more pervasive abuses in a culture—whether that culture be one's leafy suburban duplex or one's radical Islamic police state. In the former, when men physically bruise us so that it shows, we know that flags a poisonous household civilization. In the latter, when men banish women into visually stunning gulags that the rest of the world gasps at—those imprisoning burqas within which former nurses, teachers, shopkeepers, middle-schoolers, holders of car keys and owners of fashionable pumps slowly descend into profound depression and even psychosis—we recognize ourselves for what we women often are: the dead canaries in the dark mine of human-rights Gehenna.

As first-world women, we watched our Afghan counterparts—who once voted and wore mini-skirts and comprised more than fifty percent of the physicians in their country—be transformed into people who lost everything: the right to work, to wear clothes that allow one, literally, to breathe, to see, to use one hands and feet; the right to run to the corner for a carton of milk; to visit the doctor when one discovers that lump in the breast; to whistle; to earn money so as to never have to watch, God forbid, one's own children starving to death.

Men who parade their empowerment through flaunting their successful degradation of women (what brilliant al-Qaeda public relations firm first came up with the semiotically potent burqa?) are a nation of males whose sadism, of course, is but a last-ditch effort on their part to ward off their own self-loathing. As women, for better or worse—well, for worse—we know this state of profound male self-hate intimately.

We also know—as women— know in our tears and our bones and in our aching feet, that when civilization vanishes—as in a

culture depopulated of normalcy like Afghanistan—it's females who miraculously stretch themselves to fill any breach, who are the nurturant Houdinis. Our own overworked lives have, understand, nothing in common with Afghan women's sacrifices, yet we understand, empathically, that well deep within nearly all of us that never runs dry.

Who is taking care of that ocean of orphans we see swarming in photos of refugee camps in Pakistan? Women. Of all those old people and adolescents who have lost legs and arms to both land mines and Taliban raw justice and would die if somebody wasn't, with divine patience, feeding them, cleaning them up and holding out their hearts to them so that they have a tatter of a life? Who is making donkey fodder into gruel for eight year olds who have been raped and three year olds who have watched their mothers raped? Women.

Indeed, under imprisoning burqas, women gather the lame and the hungry, the illiterate and severely traumatized—they are "gatherers" who collect up this mute country of grieving and anxious orphans.

As Jews, the resonances surrounding Afghan women's oppression are equally powerful. When we see restrictive and humiliating dress—for the burqas are meant not only to impede mobility and render arms unusable, but to shame, to advertise sadistic triumph—it's familiar to us. We *know* Jewish history, all those sumptuary laws meant to separate and debase; yellow-star epaulets and striped pajamas in 20th-century Eastern Europe hardly comprised the first sighting of House of Charnel couture. Previous centuries also featured restrictive dress for Jews, mandating, for example, "Jew-colored" pants we couldn't walk in, shirts and shoes that made us into laughingstocks, "Jew tailoring" that called on seamstresses to create compulsory clothing *meant* to sanction scapegoating and mortifying. Here, the clothes said, kick us, laugh at us, steal our money, push us into cow dung.

As Jews, we also viscerally understand the horrors of incrementalism, its hair-raising creepiness—our special inheritance, after all, is the Holocaust. We remember how we were first required to register ourselves with the authorities, and then wear the Star, then the curfews and the expulsion from universities, the forfeited job, then the herding into ghettos. We have watched the vector of Afghan women's forfeitures—the non-restrictive veils becoming face-covering drapes, which in some places were first required in the city and then later in the villages, too, and first mandated only for older women, but then girls, too, and the no driving and then the no working and no school, and then the weighted tonsorial tablecloths with tiny netted eye-holes that give one very impaired vision and consequent chronic eye strain, under which, in hot weather, it is common to faint under the layers of what becomes a suffocating tent, and then the rules forbidding being seen outdoors without the company of a man, the weekly public executions . . . it murders by degrees.

For these women, after the hunger comes the incapacitating fear, and the acute depression and the vacant contagion of hopelessness. There is a terrible communicable rash of suicides among women in Afghanistan. Says Sima Wali from Refugee Women in Development, "Mostly women kill themselves by drinking battery fluid and caustic soda. It's a painful, terrible way to die, it takes days. But we are sick and hungry and crippled and sensory deprived and utterly isolated and we've been terrorized for over twenty years. Through our suicides we give hope to one another. I know you can't understand this."

And we know, as Jews, too, Gregory Bateson's famous "frog study" about the accommodationist nature of people who are victimized incrementally, whose fingers slip, as it were, from the ledge one by one: Frogs thrown directly into a pot of boiling water have the sense to jump out immediately. But frogs in a pot of water that is heated up gradually, boil to death. Such is the case with victimizaions that happen degree by degree.

Finally, as both Jews and women, we understand the black tragi-comedy of political resistance. It is not just the smuggling of guns or the theft of cabbages in a Lithuanian field or pomegranates from a Taliban-guarded orchard. Not just underground schools and daring to strap a laptop under your burqa. It is sex amid rubble, the illicit hiding of a bauble, risking death to get one's hair frosted just the right shade of Clairol in an unlit closet.

What brilliant **al-Qaeda P.R. firm** came up with the **potent** idea of the **burqa?**

Defiance is a coping strategy. Yes, we *will* sneak down the alley after curfew to whisper among other women and do each other's nails—this suggests civilization, loans women the solace of art, expresses how we take care of one another. As one Afghan woman told LILITH, "They want to break your soul, to shatter you as a human being—so the moral response is not to let them do it."

In speaking with Afghan mothers, we discover an entire nation of women with post-traumatic stress disorder, suffering intrusive, terrifying flashbacks, recurrent nightmares, hallucinations, an acute sense of past events being experienced again and again, desperate efforts to avoid much of life because it awakens unspeakable moments, intense distress over exposure to harmless things, estrangement, detachment, an inability to love, a sense of life's being already over,

monumental struggles with sleep or concentration or anger, being exhausted in one's gut from unending hypervigilance. These women are raising the next generation, how on earth can they successfully do it?

Trauma often has a flip side, however, and, with support and trust, can birth in people deep, positive changes, what researchers call "post-traumatic growth." For some, pulverizing experiences can steep into an ennobled philosophy of life, can be shaped on a new potter's wheel of self-perception, and fired into a transcendent commitment to the good, to humanity as if blessedly witnessed from above.

Because we are Jewish women, we can work to help Afghan women tell their stories. Because of our own experience—present and past—we may be able to bear the anxiety of others' pain without turning from it, "disappearing" it. The concept of "healing" is fairly useless in such a magnified world of anguish and trauma. But as Jews and women, we can help our Afghan sisters move toward their empowerment, and help them build their wall for wailing.

In October, LILITH spoke with . . .
Sima Wali, an Afghan working with a relief agency in the U.S.

What has been most painful for you and other Afghan women?

Wali: You know, believe it or not, Afghan women had the right to vote before American women did. We won the right to go to school and dispense with the veil in the 1920s. Our mothers wore miniskirts in the '60s and '70s. Multiply the losses of Sept. 11 to begin to see the horrors for Afghan women. The last 20 years of women's dehumunization is unprecedented in Afghan history. In educated families, it has not been unusual for everyone to be under house arrest, for intellectuals to be tortured and put in prison, for women to be raped. No one comes out of Kabul prison alive—you're in a tiny, damp room where you are constantly interrogated, you have no contact with anyone, no one knows where you are, if you are alive or dead.

We don't leave our homes. Some women can't afford to buy burqas, so they don't leave their homes ever. Can you imagine? Some borrow someone else's burqa but then how does the woman lending her burqa get home? The rest of us are afraid to go out. The Taliban flog people with twisted wire cables that are 4 feet long, or with branches of willow, they beat you, on your head and feet, all over. They want to demean you in public.

One time an older woman was in the vegetable market haggling to buy food—haggling is the customary way Afghans shop. She was carrying children and groceries under her burqa and was trying to maneuver, to pay, to haggle with her arms, gesturing. A Taliban saw her arm showing and pulled her away and started beating her. But there was only the one Taliban there and a lot of other people. So she started screaming and took onions and threw them at him. Shopkeepers came to her aid. He had to run away. People are so tired of the Taliban. This woman had welts, bruises, it's very painful when you are flogged. Women are all numb with fear. In Kabul, the Taliban dominate you. If they beat you, you don't resist—you accept it, because they will take you to prison. If you are a young widow and pretty, you are subjected to sexual violence. If you are seen sitting in the front seat of a taxi, they flog you, 4 or 5 men will beat you. You don't want to resist or you will be dead.

Why is there such hatred of women?

Wali: They pick on women because we dominate society. The men have nothing; if women have jobs what the men see is that we have taken their jobs. Taliban men are bent on showing their power in public—through what they make women wear and through floggings and public executions. If you see what happens to women, it gives the impression that the Taliban are in charge—the female form covered from head to foot is symbolic that they are in power. They believe that women are not humans. That God gave us human faces so we're more palatable, but that we are really demons, only for reproduction.

It is a well-known fact that Taliban men believe in being with boys. They are born and raised away from women, so they practice sex with boys, against the will of very young ones, even though they issue life-and-death edicts against homosexuality. In Kandahar, in fact, it's a common practice; they get into fights over who gets to keep which young boys.

Look how powerless they make women look, invisible, imprisoned in our homes and tents, away from jobs, barred from doctors and hospitals. Male doctors are forbidden to treat women. A woman I know was giving birth at home and she was in trouble and at risk of dying and had to go to the hospital. It was after curfew so the taxi she was in was stopped and she and her husband were flogged. You go home, you have bruises, it shatters you as a human being, as a woman, as an Afghan. This woman died. They want to break your soul. The Taliban are holding all women hostage, they are anathema to our Afghan culture.

Sippi Azerbaijani Moghaddam

People around the world are outraged when they hear even a small part of these atrocities. What else should Western women try to understand about your lives?

Wali: You don't understand that in Afghanistan families, the men are dead, or fighting, or driving a taxi in Kuwait. The women are all widows—so there are a million orphans and handicapped children and those who have lost limbs due to landmines in our country (Afghanistan is the most heavily landmined country in the world.) Who is taking care of everything? Who do you think? The women: there are a half a million war widows. It all falls on women, to take care of all the orphans and disabled children, to feed children when there is no way to make money because you are forbidden to work. All of this falls on women.

But some of what the West sees as repression of women is more complicated, or, in fact, is what women have chosen for themselves. For example, during the late 18th and early 19th century, women of higher echelons wore the *chador* as a symbol of prestige. Before the Taliban, some women chose to wear it in the cities but not the fields, to protect themselves from what they saw as the evil of the city. For some women it is a fashion—to declare that you are religiously conservative, not Westernized. It was a cultural symbol of Afghan pride, of pride in yourself as a woman in a land that demeaned you and in a country with no hope. Afghan women feel misunderstood by Westerners, even if you mean well.

You also don't understand that we have been tired and hungry and terrorized for over 20 years. We have absolutely nothing. What thwarts us is having no money to enhance women's position in society, and the fact that we have no international recognition. It's so painful.

Why aren't we hearing more? Real incidents, with details? Reporters have said that it's like interviewing Holocaust survivors who can't talk about what happened to them because it exposes them again to the trauma, it re-awakens intense distress. Is this one reason why it is so hard to get women's stories?

Wali: Yes, it is the same as Holocaust survivors. You have to understand, we are all traumatized. I too am a war victim but a lucky one who managed to come to the U.S. Others like myself suffer from secondary trauma. The events of September 11 triggered my memories, it all comes back, horrible memories of war, absolute lawlessness, that we are raped, killed, cannot leave our house. *[She starts crying]* . . . that I am so claustrophobic, when I feel trapped, tired, my friends were killed, my classmates, just because they were women, they had nothing to do with politics. My closest friend from childhood, her sin was that she married into the royal family, she sat next to me at school *[silence, crying]*. . . from age 13, compassionate . . . beautiful. First they murdered her children then, then her . . . gunned her down. Why is this happening? We made this promise, we have walked away from the promise of never again, over and over. *[silence, crying]*

I sleep, but it is hard. It never goes away. I work tirelessly now in memory of the innocent women of Afghanistan who lost their work. It is emotionally draining, nobody listens. I'm carrying the screams of these Afghan women, no one hears, they have skills but they have been transformed into a nation of beggars, they are kind and gentle. I will never walk away from them. I have not been paid for more than six months, there is so little funding for our work. *[Weeping.]* Bombs are being trained on them, they have empty stomachs. I can play a very small part in this. To bear witness.

After September 11, some Afghan women, at such risk to themselves, initiated a petition to support these Americans who died. To collect signatures, to implant their thumbprints for those who don't know how to write, to smuggle these lists across the border to Pakistan. They are so afraid, but they do this, to say, "We are with you."

Women's organizing in Afghanistan is rarely publicized. What might be happening politically?

Wali: What's hardest is that during the past 21 years of strife in Afghanistan—including America's current attempts to shape a governing coalition—the world hears only the polarized voices—the Northern Alliance, the Taliban, the Soviets—when for a quarter century there has been this consistent, moderate, silent majority whose voice is never heard. This voice is tolerant-minded, strongly committed to peace and to democracy, and unwavering in its belief in human rights. Why is this voice not heard? Because it is the voice of women. We are kept isolated from the world and from each other. The world has lost 21 years during which it could have

helped us at the field level. We need help in being entitled to come together, to be a political, organizational group, because we are the broad, moderate spectrum that is Afghan society. The Taliban are largely Arab religious-extremist outsiders; they are not the Afghan people. When power is allocated, women have to be at the table. We are the only ones who aren't bearing arms. We are the majority. How can we not be included?

What can American women do?

Wali: One computer costs $1000 to buy in Pakistan. We can then train Afghan refugees in computer skills. In the camps, it is a nation of women, we are the dominant displaced population. These women will train others. We will smuggle in computers back to Afghanistan. Afghan women want to work—in handicrafts, in schools. Help us acquire skills, how to run an orphanage, a health clinic, how to work with war-traumatized orphans, with a traumatized population. Remind us we are not forgotten.

. . . Sippi Azerbaijani Moghaddam, an Iranian working in Afghanistan (and Afghan refugee camps) since 1995.

When I was a child in Iran, my father was in love with Afghanistan; he saw it as an exotic backwater, a world like that evoked in medieval Persian manuscripts, a harsh geography of ancient honorable men and silenced women. When I was 6, he traveled there as a tourist, and when he came back he said to my mother, "We should bring up our daughters there, so they won't go awry." He approved of Afghan society's treatment of women. When I was 25, I got a job in Afghanistan and I went, but not to become a silenced woman.

In Afghan society, gender-discrimination runs so deep. I have a friend who says, "Every Afghan man has a burqa inside his head," meaning that men automatically think that's where we should be, under a curtain. When the edict forbidding women to work was put out, Afghan men were delighted. They had been waiting for an opportunity like that. There is so much unemployment. Men think, 'Why should women get the jobs?' It's not just the women who are sitting at home in Afghanistan; large numbers of men are also sitting at home.

There are many different Afghanistans, which is why—closed borders and communications restrictions aside—people outside the country often feel they can't get a handle on the place. The Taliban is disorganized and erratic. They may issue a frightening edict but then weakly enforce it or leave town. There are sudden unexplained clamp downs where people are executed on the slimmest pretexts, or their arms are chopped off. For women, city norms are different from village norms, and there are vast differences between the educated and the uneducated. Illiteracy is rampant, especially now for females, who are forbidden to attend school.

The biggest struggle is to get over the gender discrimination that's rife in this society. I work in a relief organization and we fight to get women into the workplace. But it's hard—hiring a woman is expensive and a big logistical nightmare. Since women are only allowed to work in healthcare, you must pretend that whatever job you are offering is really in healthcare; you have to get official permission. If you hire a woman you have to hire a driver and a car and outfit the car with curtains, because that's the only way women are allowed to travel. On top of that, for every woman you hire, you also have to hire a man. He needs a separate car. Anywhere you go where women are working, there is an office next door where guys sit all day and smoke cigarettes. Any company that hires women is gender-segregated—there are separate buildings for women, separate computers for males and females; it's disabling for the society.

Despite all these obstacles, I personally feel there are no doors that are closed in Afghanistan. As far as I'm concerned, there's 'official permission for this' and 'official permission for that' but you can get around it. I go to meetings and fight Afghan men on behalf of Afghan women and I win. At this very moment male politicians are describing the future of Afghanistan; we women have to flag up the message, to publicize that there are only men at the table.

In the refugee camps now, a lot is happening for women. You have to understand, these camps are overwhelmingly female-led communities—the men are gone—and those of us who work in women's relief organizations are desperately pushing to train these women to be managers and decision-makers, not just to do nothing or hold the lowliest of undesirable jobs. The only thing that restricts us in our work is insufficient funding. The women watch female relief workers with envy. They don't look at us and think, 'oh this is bad secular values, the West gone bad.' They desperately want these freedoms and opportunities for themselves, too. It's dangerous for any woman who has a job. She has to be accompanied every day by an armed guard, because she took a man's job. To work, you have to be very courageous.

The women of Afghanistan are heroic. Schools for girls are banned, yet it is a miracle that women show up to teach secretly anyway. In rural areas that can't be overseen by the Taliban, there are women making sure that their girls illicitly have schooling.

The misogyny in the culture is shocking. I know a woman, a teacher, who was beaten for teaching secretly in a home school. She was teaching because her husband had been killed and she needed money to eat. So after being brutalized by the Taliban she went back to live with her mother and

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Burqa Dream

BY SARAH BLUSTAIN

It wasn't until November that I had my first burqa dream. I am surprised it took so long. In the dream, I was in Berlin, an embarrassingly obvious conflation. I was touring with a group of women, and uncertain of our bearings. The women wore burqas or, alternatively, scarves on their heads and long layered clothing. I was the only one—of course, in a dream it would have to be—defiantly uncovered, in a white blouse and light blue knickers. My bare ankles caused the greatest stir. Repeatedly warned, I tried to cover my hair with my bare arms. But, of course, I failed.

So there it is, a stark symbol of repression, political or Freudian, and the new cornerstone of any discussion of resistance and liberty as well. Serving American political goals during the war in Afghanistan, the burqa was almost immediately a symbol. The "woman of cover" (President Bush's coinage) and her burqa were the signifiers of a society, literally, veiled in darkness. And, by contrast, the unveiled face of the Afghan woman, while she also often cringed from the camera, had become Liberty. In print, that woman is often beautiful. Read John Lee Anderston, writing in The New Yorker in an October dispatch from Afghanistan: "The woman teachers were beautiful, with large brown eyes and fair skin...and most of the women had dark kohl painted around their eyes." Were they really beautiful? Who knows; that's an aesthetic decision. His real meaning comes in contrast, when they wrap themselves in white burqas to leave the school: "They had become wraiths, stumbling along on foot or riding donkeys, bobbing away amid a throng of chattering, happy, barefaced girls." Indeed, there was no greater sign of American "success" in Afghanistan than smiling women in colorful scarves—the November 18 New York Times showed us two women in turquoise wraps, a mother and a daughter, heading off to the zoo—and headlines like this one from the same paper: "In Kabul, DVD and TVs Fill the Shopping Bags; Burqas Sit on the Shelves." (The proof of our other success is in there too, liberating a country for "shopping.")

Burqa Dream by Leila Shawa from *The Space Between Our Footsteps* by Naomi Shihab Nye (Simon & Schuster)

I suspect this identification of freedom with faces framed by scarves and eyes framed by kohl will continue, and will find its way into our writing, our dreams, and even our fashion. It is tempting, this symbolism, but it is also a fetish. While the mainstream press has been restrained in reporting the offenses of the Northern Alliance coalition of warlords for the duration of their proxy-war on our behalf, The Village Voice reported in November that the recently assassinated Ahmen Shah Massood, generally glorified in the papers as "the legendary Northern Alliance fighter," "partook in campaigns of systematic rape that predated Taliban rule." One member of the feminist Afghan group RAWA told the Voice: "The only difference between the crimes [the Northern Alliance] committed and the Taliban is that the Taliban officially announced the restrictions on women. . . Northern Alliance committed many, many crimes against women—rapes, forced marriages. Women were afraid of going outside when they were in control." So much for symbols. It's not surprising that Margaret Atwood cites her time visiting in Afghanistan, years before the Taliban, as a significant influence on the aesthetic shape of her novel about female repression, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Immediately, of course, we are warned not to condemn what are merely cultural differences; the veil isn't always a symbol of cultural misogyny. It's a warning we'll hear often as debates over the Western reconstruction of Afghanistan intensify. As Orthodox women wear hats or wigs out of modesty, so too must the Muslim woman cover herself head to toe. If a woman wears a burqa by her own choice, who are we to complain? But I cannot entirely buy this logic. Shame *can* be built into a culture. Race shame, ethnic shame, body shame. Despite feminist gains, gender shame. Is it better that women actively wish to disappear into a shroud while men move freely in the world? Is this a sign of a "different" society? Or is it one in which women have internalized Taliban-style hostility to them?

In this context all cultural incarnations of "modesty" have become suspect in my eyes. I have tried to resist this, the slippery slope of feminist resentment. But still I wonder, is the burqa the grandmother of our own ritual humility? Since the attacks, we've attended, in unprecedented ways, to the veil. We have new words for it: the burqa, and the chador, the pursuit of *purdah* or *hijab*. We have heard, too, of women's taint of "impurity": How many have died, in childbirth and otherwise, in a country that for six years has forbidden women to be doctors, but also has forbidden male doctors from treating women.

But the veil is not new to this war, nor is women's shame. We know already the lace-faced bride. And other images spin around: mikvah, anorexia, virgin-and-whore. Is it fanatical and paranoid to connect all these? It is. We are not, of course, all victims of Taliban misogyny. But also, it is not. The veil, after all, isn't absent from secular American life. On that special day when we walk down the aisle, the day we have spent years anticipating, we put it on as if to say: Now I am a *real* woman.

SARAH BLUSTAIN is Managing Editor of The New Republic.

XENI

(FOREIGNER)

BY ALICE SPARBERG ALEXIOU

I was in Greece with my husband on September 11, when terrorists attacked New York, my home. The news about the World Trade Center reached us in a surreal setting: driving to Nick's birth-city, Salonika, on a road high in the mountains of north central Greece, a craggy, hostile terrain that had sheltered the Greek resistance during World War II. Stopping at a café, we gaped at a television news station, airing what would be the endlessly-replayed footage of the planes slicing through each of the Twin Towers. Nick and I, Americans and New Yorkers, stared in disbelief.

"When you're a bully, expect to have your hand slapped," one local man offered. Over the next weeks, I would hear similar sentiments voiced across the spectrum of Greek society, insults that cut to the core of each of my identities—as a woman, a Jew, and American. In the ubiquitous cafes, left-wing intellectuals said imperialist America had it coming. Talking heads on Greek television predicted the imminent demise of American hegemony. Meanwhile, at a soccer match in Athens 11 days after the attack, fans jeered during a requested moment of silence for the terrorism victims in New York. They also burned an Israeli flag and tried to burn the American one too.

Greek anti-Americanism is inextricably tied to anti-Israel sentiments. This dates largely from the late '60s and '70s, when the United States misguidedly supported a seven-year military dictatorship. In the '80s, Andreas Papandreou, the American-educated Prime Minister whose rule lasted for 15 years, exploited these feelings to the hilt. An entire generation of Greeks grew up on such slogans as "American Bases Out of Greece," even as Arab terrorists were staging hijackings from the Athens airport, and local terrorist groups were throwing bombs at American and Israeli targets in Athens. In 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon, Papandreou sent the ship that ferried Yasir Arafat to Athens, where he received a hero's welcome. In 1985, the United States officially warned its citizens not to travel to Greece.

A week after the WTC attack, my husband returned to New York. I stayed in Greece another five weeks, researching a book in Salonika about this city's once-great Jewish community, annihilated in the Holocaust. When Americans began to bomb Afghanistan four weeks after the attack, demonstrators marched through the streets of Athens and Salonika every few days. In Salonika, they often stopped in front of the American consulate, where they sprayed graffiti on the walls to vent their anger.

I felt angry too. On the one hand, I was angry at the Greeks who were making me feel defensive about America's retaliation for the loss of thousands of lives back home. But mixed in with my fury was shame over the frequent short-sightedness of American foreign policy, which I was now being forced, all alone, to confront. Greece was only one of numerous countries where the U.S. had backed a corrupt government. Embarrassing examples abound: Chile, Central America, and at present, Saudi Arabia. Nor was my discomfort confined to my being American; this being Greece, it also included my Jewishness.

The Greeks' feelings towards their own Jews, most of whom died in the Holocaust and today number no more than 5,000, are decidedly ambivalent. In Salonika, where over 50,000 Jews—20 per cent of the city—were deported to Auschwitz in 1943, the memory of them has been deliberately erased. In Greece, editorial writers even in respected newspapers use the term "Zionism" as a synonym for "imperialism." The vicious rumor that began circulating a few days after September 11, implicating Jews in the terrorist plot by saying that Jews had stayed home from the World Trade Center on that day, found its way into local news broadcasts in Greece and everyday conversations.

Maria, a young woman with whom I was taking Greek lessons, asked me one day whether Americans supported the bombing of Afghanistan. When I said yes, she looked at me askance. Then she went into a diatribe of complaints about America: that we are arrogant, greedy, selfish.

"I've been dying to talk to an American since the bombing began," Maria said. She insisted I come to dinner, with her and her British husband. I couldn't bring myself to turn her down, though they would, I knew, serve me on a platter.

Over the next several days, I pondered what I would say to Maria. "Americans are defending their way of life," I explained patiently, three nights later, as I sat at the dining-room table of their beautiful apartment.

They looked disapproving. "Way of life? What do you mean?"

I explained about the Constitution and the First Amendment and our open society, constantly replenished by the never-ending flow of immigrants eager also to become Americans.

And as I talked to my hosts about feminism, I realized that I had felt marginalized during these several weeks not only as an American and a Jew, but also as a woman. "It's not the Taliban who are the terrorists. It's the imperialists!" leftist marchers had chanted one night as I was walking about the streets of Salonika. And I had wanted to yell back at them, you who are so eager to protest perceived injustices, why are you not protesting the Taliban's dehumanizing of women?

But in Greece I am *xeni*, a foreigner, and my New York Jewish woman's voice is not welcome.

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siblings and they also beat her black and blue. They thought it was irresponsible for her not to remarry and instead to move in with them and eat *their* food. On the other hand, there are women in the refugee camps who pretend to be widows because they get special treatment from relief agencies.

Afghan women are seen as the ones who keep the culture "clean," meaning they will bring up a good Muslim, a good Pashtun. They are "pure." In rural areas, men approve of the fact that women don't speak Dari or Pashtun, the main languages, but only obscure local languages. Women's ignorance means that is the culture is being kept pure.

Even an educated woman who has been to the U.K. or America couldn't go to a party in Afghanistan without her parents sending a man to supervise her. It's symbolic. "Women can't control themselves morally, we can't trust this woman on her own." If she turned up on her own, other Afghan families would talk about how brazen she is.

Men and women in this country have seen a lot-people blown to pieces, constant landmine tragedies, people betraying one another and being taken away, rapes, mutilations, looting-all in relation to 20 years of war and Communists, *mujahadeen* groups, sub-groups turning on one another. It's not unusual to see little boys who are the heads of families.

Please let your readers know that Afghan people on the whole—especially women—have been hopeful since September 11. We women are gearing up, ready to step outside the oppressive, unending restraints. Afghan women's problems are old—it's not like we led this charmed life before the Taliban—but we feel, finally, that we are not alone.

(This section continues on page 34.)

Helping Afghan Women

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children provides education, health services and livelihood opportunities to women and children. The Commission has created an Afghan Women's Fund specifically to deal with the critical needs of female and underage Afghans in Pakistan (who comprise the vast majority of refugees). WCRWC, 122 E. 42nd St., NY, NY 10168-1289, (212) 551-3088. wcrwc@womenscommission.org

Refugee Women in Development, focused on human rights abuses against uprooted women, is currently building Afghan women's non-governmental organizations. One of the most chronic psychological tolls for many Afghan women has been their Taliban-imposed isolation, so RefWID purchases computers for Afghan women. RWD, 5225 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Suite 502, Washington, D.C. 20015, (703) 931-6442.

The American Jewish World Service provides humanitarian support, technical assistance and emergency relief to over 50 countries represent "Jews as global citizens committed to social justice," and, indeed, the Afghan women's relief organizations to which LILITH spoke felt Jews in particular have been responsive to their unfolding crises. AJWS supports three projects in Afghanistan, including home schools for 2500 girls, clinics and two hospitals specifically serving women. AJWS, 45 W. 36th St., 10th floor, New York, NY 10010, (800) 889-7146. www.AJWS.org

After the September 11 attacks, this 1994 poem came to us at LILITH. The message attached read "This has brought comfort to many."

UNDO IT, TAKE IT BACK

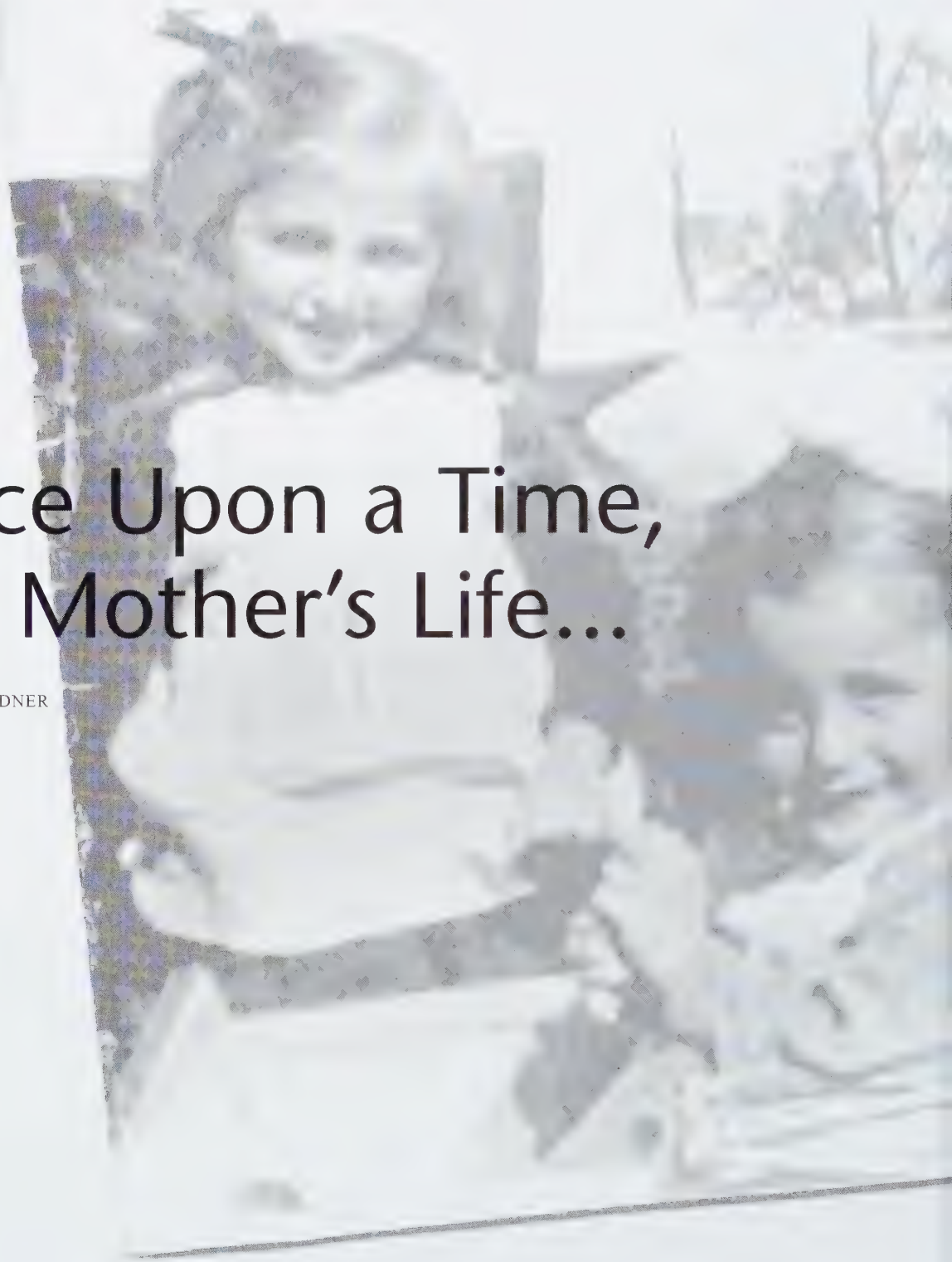
BY NESSA RAPOPORT

Undo it, take it back, make every day the previous one until I am returned to the day before the one that made you gone. Or set me on an airplane traveling west, crossing the date line again and again, losing this day, then that, until the day of loss still lies ahead, and you are here instead of sorrow.

NESSA RAPOPORT is author of a novel, *Preparing for Sabbath,* and of *A Woman's Book of Grieving*, from which this prose poem is drawn.

Once Upon a Time, My Mother's Life...

BY ANNA KOLODNER



I can't remember a time when I didn't know about the Holocaust. Both of my parents were concentration camp survivors, and their experiences were the backdrop of my life. I was particularly aware of my mother's three little girls—Sorah, Aliza and Shoshana. At the ages of three, five and seven, they were taken from my mother by the S.S. and sent to Auschwitz, where they perished. I wasn't born yet.

A few precious photographs of the two older girls were always displayed in our living room, and through the pieces of stories my mother sometimes told, I came to know them. Their faces, of course, were etched in my heart. As the years passed, I watched as my mother would attempt to tell someone about her life before the Nazis, and about her beautiful children. These occasions were rare and it was difficult to determine to whom my mother would open herself up. Sometimes it would be a mere stranger with sympathetic eyes.

She would tread carefully onto this unspeakable terrain, checking the nuances of reaction for some shred of understanding. If none came, she stepped back—danger lurked. I no longer recall the spoken details of those encounters, but I shall never forget the sense of fear in my mother's eyes and the unspoken conversation that passed between us at such moments. I felt helpless to save her.

These episodes brought a particular kind of tightness to my throat. On the one hand, I wanted to keep the past a secret. I despised the sense of feeling different and didn't want to be "discovered." But on the other, I cherished—with some arrogance—the fact that I bore soulful knowledge of events that outsiders would never understand. Most of all, I wanted to shield my mother from pain.

The last time we found ourselves in this situation together was shortly before her death. I had accompanied her to a doctor's office, and the secretary called us in and began taking my mother's history. Full name, address, marital status. She then asked how many children she had, living or deceased. My mother instantly looked to me for help, her eyes pleading, "I don't know what to do here. Why does this secretary need to know, what will she understand? Please give me permission to omit the past. I'll tell her about you and your brother. That will be enough."

I struggled to breathe, feeling, with a sudden crystal clarity, the full force of the inhumanity that perpetually pressed upon my mother. There was nothing speakable, I thought, that should cause one to deny one's children. Though no longer in the camps, my mother was compelled to murder the memory of her daughters and bury them again and again.

I nodded calmly to let her know that it would be all right, that I would take charge, though beneath the surface I raged at the Nazis and at a world so able to lose its capacity for compassion and understanding. I determined that this one individual—this secretary—would know what was done to my mother. Surely the starkness of the facts would elicit a redemptive human response from her. I listed my mother's three daughters—Sorah, Aliza, Shoshana—their birth dates, and the fact that they were killed at Auschwitz. Then I waited. The secretary looked up, said nothing, asked the next question.

I too said nothing, though the absence of our voices was deafening. What was done to my mother had blackened the world, and I should have shouted this. But as my mother knew, and I did not, there was no place to shout, no place to even whisper. There was no place for us.

I wanted to hold my mother, to tell her that I understood about the richness of the life she lost, the joys, the dreams, and yes, the children. Fighting tears, I silently indicted the secretary and the world for its irreparable lack of humanity.

Shortly after this incident my mother died. The following morning my brother and I went to the funeral home. We had buried our father years before and knew what to expect. Among the other arrangements, we would be asked what we wanted in the obituary. When the funeral director asked for the full names of my mother's children, I clearly and quietly listed them—Sorah Levy, Aliza Shulamis Levy, Shoshana Rochel Levy—before my brother's and mine. In my heart I felt that this was the place, the final place where my mother would not be denied and the world would know that at one time, once upon a time, her life had been different.

ANNA KOLODNER, Ph.D., lives in Brookline, MA, with her husband and three children.

At the turn of the last century, when revolutionary, feminist and Jewish interests often clashed with one another, "Red" Emma Goldman was able to synthesize fragmented, even warring, political identities. How did she do it?

Conjuring Emma Goldman

BY RACHEL KRANSON

OUTSPOKEN ACTIVIST ON BEHALF of reproductive rights and renowned anarchist revolutionary, Emma Goldman (1869-1940) has materialized for years in popular books and films; she appears as a character in E.L. Doctorow's novel *Ragtime* (1975), and turns up as a singing revolutionary in the 1998 Broadway adaptation of the novel. She also emerges as a character in Warren Beatty's 1981 film "Reds" (1981), and there are a number of lesser known plays, operas, and films that illustrate the events of her life. Most recently, the documentary film "Emma Goldman: The Anarchist Guest" (Coleman Romalis, 2000) focuses on the later years of her life in Toronto. More than any other woman of her time—a time rife with politically active Jewish women, such as Ernestine Rose, Rose Schneiderman and Clara Lemlich—Emma Goldman stands out in our cultural memory as the paradigmatic feminist, activist, and Jewish heroine.

Emma Goldman's prominence as a cultural figure has trickled down from books, plays and movies into individual people's lives. Mentioning her name even casually elicits Emma anecdotes. One man reports growing up with a framed picture of Goldman hanging in his parent's house, another had organized an "Emma Goldman Day" for a Jewish summer camp in Massachusetts. Journalist Ari Goldman and Shira Dicker named their daughter Emma Goldman in her memory. Says Ari Goldman about this decision: "I always admired Red Emma . . . and I desperately wanted to find out that we were related. Now I am related to Emma Goldman!"

Other die-hard Emma fans include the staff and volunteers of the Emma Goldman Papers Project in Berkeley, who gather and organize thousands of letters, photographs, newspaper articles, and government documents about Goldman's life. The Jewish Women's archive has Emma on one of their 2002 "Women of Valor" posters. And Emma afficionados everywhere can be seen wearing the popular Emma Goldman T-shirt stamped with her famous misquote, "If I can't dance, its not my Revolution" [p. 27].

My most recent encounter with the figure of Emma Goldman occurred a few days after the attacks on the World Trade Center. I left my apartment on the Lower East Side of Manhattan—where police were giving out masks to enable residents to walk through the smoke and soot still erupting from the former Twin Towers—to view "The Anarchist Guest" at Makor, a Jewish cultural center on the Upper West Side. The discussion after the documentary—facilitated by J.J. Goldberg of The Forward and Lilith's Susan Weidman Schneider—took on an almost séance-like quality, with audience members conjuring up their own images of Emma Goldman. Referring to her by her first name, as if she were an old friend, they speculated about how she'd have reacted to the events of September 11: "Emma would have been concerned about the people of Afghanistan, who are afraid of military retaliation and are desperately fleeing their country," one person

said. "She would have felt a sense of uncertainty about whether this attack warrants a military response," suggested another.

Of course, no one really knows what "Emma" would have said. But what is the power of this woman that inspires so many people—even years after her death—to speak in Emma Goldman's name?

Emma Goldman was born in Kovno, Lithuania in 1869. At 17, leaving behind an increasingly anti-Semitic Russia and a strained relationship with her parents, she immigrated to America. Settling in Rochester, NY, she worked as a seamstress in a textile factory, and in 1887 married Jacob Kershner. Iconoclastic in this as in so many things, she divorced him after two years of an unhappy union.

According to her autobiography *Living My Life* (1931), it was during the course of this short-lived marriage that Emma Goldman witnessed the event that galvanized her politically and drew her to anarchy as an overarching political ideology. In 1887, seven immigrant labor organizers were accused of bombing Haymarket Square in Chicago. Their conviction was based on their political beliefs rather than on evidence, and all but one were sentenced to death. Hearing of their execution, Goldman recalls how "something new and wonderful was born in my soul. A great idea, a burning faith, a determination to dedicate myself to the memory of my martyred comrades."

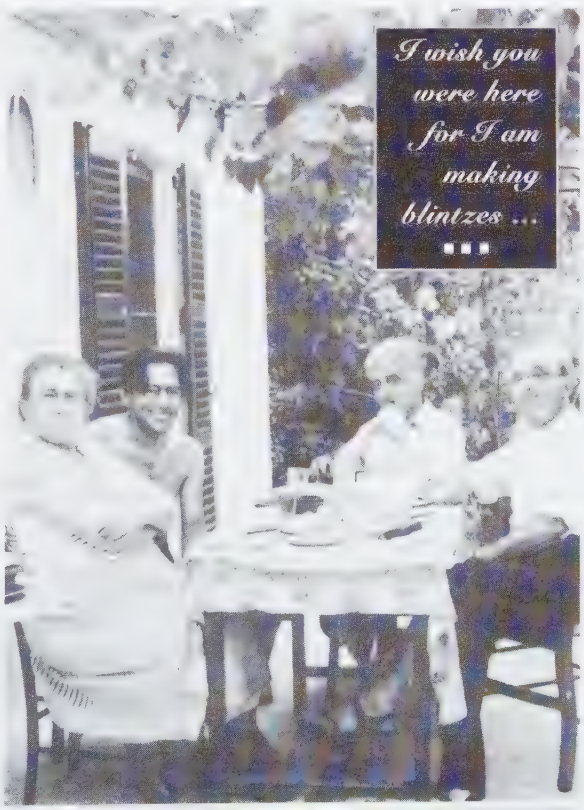
After her divorce in 1889, Goldman moved to the Lower East Side and quickly became involved in radical politics. It was at this time that she developed her skills as an orator in Yiddish and German—and eventually in English as well. At the height of her career, Goldman traveled all over the United States, lecturing to thousands of people on labor rights, contraception, and free speech. *Mother Earth*—a magazine she published from 1906-1918 that included essays on anarchism, reproductive freedom, pacifism, and literature—disseminated her ideas to thousands more.

As Goldman's fame increased, so did the American government's attempt to suppress her political activity. In 1893, a speech she gave at a demonstration for the unemployed landed her in prison for a year. In 1901, she was jailed and later released for suspected involvement in the assassination of President William McKinley. And in 1916 she was arrested for advocating birth control at a public lecture. When the United States entered WWI, the clash between Goldman and the American government came to a head. Her anti-conscription activities were considered a threat to national security, and she was jailed once again. In 1919, with 248 other immigrant radicals, Emma Goldman was exiled to Russia.

Although the excitement of Goldman's life did not cease after her exile—her "disillusionment" with communist Russia and her involvement in the Spanish Civil War were still to come—it is Goldman's pre-exilic existence that appears in fiction, in movies, in plays. When we conjure up images of Emma, we see her bellowing out fiery speeches to enraptured audiences on the Lower East Side and all across America, we see people inspired to demand eight-hour workdays, to claim a woman's right to bear children only when she feels ready, to gain "the right to self-expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things."

Why does the persona of Emma Goldman hold so much currency in American culture? Goldman's hybrid political identity—the fact that she is both a revolutionary and a feminist—may be what generates this power for us today. The first time we see the Goldman character in "Reds," she's arguing with Jack Reed, the film's central character. "This is not the time to go to jail for birth control . . . you are too valuable to the anti-war movement," he insists, arguing that thousands of American boys will be killed should the United States enter World War I. Goldman, of course, is adamant about speaking on the topic. "Thousands of American women—overworked, underfed—are dying," she counters. "If they give birth to any more children they won't last out the year. Are their lives any less valuable than thousands of American boys?"

While this rendition of Emma Goldman is a dramatization, more of our time than of hers, it does highlight an important aspect of her politics—that she brought a feminist consciousness to the radical causes for which she worked. Her anarchist philosophy, her belief in the "the spirit of revolt, in whatever form, against everything



The illustrations on these pages are from postcards created by, and available from, the Emma Goldman Papers Project at the University of California, Berkeley, as part of its line of "Emmarabelia." Visit www.sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman. Above: Original photo is housed at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam. Photo, opposite page: Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College.

that hinders human growth," did not refer only to the state. In her essays—"Marriage and Love," "The Social Aspectsof Birth Control," and others—Goldman encouraged women to apply that spirit to their personal lives, to revolt against marriage, an institution through which a woman loses "her name, her privacy, her self-respect, her very life." She instructed that a woman should take control of her body, to "decide how many children she should bring into the world, whether they should be brought into the world by the man she loves and because she wants the child, or should be born in hatred and loathing." And she did not cease preaching about sexual politics even when other well-known anarchists, such as Peter Kropotkin, reacted to her work by saying that it would be more effective if "it would not waste so much space discussing sex."

When we conjure up images of Emma, we are reminded that the feminist struggle is not separate from the fight against exploitation and poverty. We remember that issues of reproductive and sexual freedom are not incidental to a free society, that sexism can exist in the most radical communities, that feminist issues cannot wait until after the revolution.

Unlike many feminists of her day, Emma Goldman was opposed to women having the vote. Why was Goldman, an avid supporter of reproductive and sexual freedom, against women having access to what seems like such a crucial tool of social change? Goldman answers this riddle in "Woman Suffrage," printed in *Anarchism and Other Essays* (1911): "I am not opposed to woman suffrage on the conventional ground that she is not equal to it." Rather, she felt that voting was "an evil...that has only helped to enslave people...it has but closed their eyes that they may not see how craftily they were made to submit." For Goldman, suffrage was a tool of the government and the ruling class—a trick to make workers believe that they had some stake in government that exploited them—and valuable neither to women nor to men.

Emma Goldman had little regard for the middle- and upper-class feminists who would secure their own power at the expense of the poor. She writes in "Woman Suffrage" that "Susan B. Anthony, no doubt an exceptional type of woman, was not only indifferent but antagonistic to labor; nor did she hesitate to manifest her antagonism when in 1869, she advised women to take the place of striking printers in New York." Even though Goldman may have been in agreement with these first wave feminists on many issues, she would not support those feminist causes that conflicted with the interests of the working class.

When we conjure up images of Emma, we are reminded that not all women share the same experiences of suffering. We remember that issues of sexism are compounded by racism and poverty, that those who are oppressed can also oppress others.

Emma Goldman's Jewish identity is not easy to negotiate. In "Anarchism: What it Really Stands For," Goldman makes it clear that she's no fan of religion—she bemoaned the ways in which religion "dominates man's mind, how it humiliates and degrades his soul. . . God has created a kingdom so despotic, so tyrannical, so cruel, so terribly exacting that naught but gloom and tears and blood have ruled the world since gods began." Similarly, in "The philosophy of Atheism," she talks about the "emancipation of the human race from all Godheads, be they Judaic, Christian, Mohammedan, Buddhistic, Brahministic, or what not."

Still, in spite of her disdain for religion, when people search for Jewish role models Emma Goldman is one of the usual suspects. They cite her lectures in Yiddish, and the fact that she began her political career in Jewish radical forums. They refer to the fact that she was inspired by the biblical Judith, writing in her autobiography that she sees herself "cutting off Holofernes' head to avenge the wrongs of my people." In addition, letters from her exile in Russia indicate her growing concern about anti-Semitism: "When I was in America, I did not believe in the Jewish question removed from the whole social question," she wrote. "But since we visited some of the pogrom regions I have come to see that there is a Jewish question, especially in the Ukraine. . . It is almost certain that the entire Jewish race will be wiped out should many more changes take place."

When we conjure up images of Emma, we are reminded that there is no one way to be a Jew, and that expressions of Jewishness are not limited to Jewish religious practice. In the case of Emma Goldman, Jewishness is expressed through a concern for Jews as an oppressed people, a grounding in Jewish literature and language, and her relentless, passionate commitment to *tikkun olam*.

More than sixty years after her death, we are still conjuring up images of Emma. For some, she appears as the archetype of the righteous rebel. For others she appears as the nostalgic remnant of a more radical Jewish past, of who we were before we chose polite, liberal politics over active, bare-faced resistance. She surfaces as a reminder that feminism, Jewishness, and a sense of social justice can all be part of one's identity, that these are not contradictory, that they need not—cannot—be separated.

And perhaps, on a September evening in the movie theater, in the wake of the World Trade Center tragedy and on the cusp of a precarious future, I conjured up my own image of Emma, simply because I did not know where else to turn. It is an image that inspires me to use all of my resources—as a feminist, a Jew, and a human being who yearns for a just society—to help me react to a new and frightening set of political and mental challenges. Or perhaps it was, simply, my own image that I was projecting—as I began to face a shocking reality that, for all her prescience, Red Emma could never have imagined.

Invention of a Feminist Sound-Bite

BY ALIX KATES SHULMAN

"If I can't dance I don't want to be in your revolution," said Emma Goldman.

Or did she? Perhaps she said, "If I can't dance I don't want to be part of your revolution," as my purple T-shirt claims under a picture of Emma looking demure in a wide-brimmed hat. Or was it rather, "If I can't dance *to it, it's not my* revolution," as the quote appears in a 1983 Passover Haggadah?

In fact, though the sentiment is indeed Emma Goldman's, she wrote none of the above, notwithstanding that each of these versions and more have been attributed to her on buttons, posters, banners, T-shirts, bumper stickers, and in books and articles, for nearly twenty years. Here, rather, is what she did say, in her 1931 autobiography *Living My Life:*

> *At the dances I was one of the most untiring and gayest. One evening a cousin of Sasha [Alexander Berkman, Goldman's lover], a young boy, took me aside. With a grave face, as if he were about to announce the death of a dear comrade, he whispered to me that it did not behoove an agitator to dance... My frivolity would only hurt the Cause. I grew furious at the impudent interference of the boy. I told him to mind his own business, I was tired of having the Cause constantly thrown into my face. I did not believe that a Cause which stood for a beautiful ideal, for anarchism, for release and freedom from conventions and prejudice, should demand the denial of life and joy. . . If it meant that, I did not want it.*

As I may, inadvertently and indirectly, bear some responsibility for the extrapolation from authentic text to familiar paraphrase, I would like to confess and set the record straight. Here is what happened. Sometime early in 1973 I received a phone call from one Jack Frager, an old-time anarchist. Like many dedicated radicals of the era before desktop publishing, he was a printer; now he had the original idea to raise funds for the Cause by printing up a batch of Emma Goldman T-shirts to hawk in Central Park at the huge upcoming festival celebrating the end of the Vietnam War. Having heard me lecture to the anarchists on Emma's feminism (after decades of obscurity during which all of her works were out of print, Emma was suddenly returning to the public eye as a hero of women's liberation), Jack was phoning to solicit my help.

I had recently published two books on Emma: a biography and a collection of her essays, both of which contained photos of her. He wondered if I might lend him a glossy photo from which to print, and also asked me to suggest a phrase or slogan from Emma's writings suitable for emblazoning on T-shirts. Delighted by an opportunity to publicize Emma's feminist side, I offered him a glossy shot of a stalwart, hatless Emma in a pince-nez and referred him to several prose passages, particularly the dancing episode, which seemed to me to embody her most lively feminist spirit. In gratitude, Jack promised me all the T-shirts I wanted, at cost.

Several days later, when I picked up my shirts along with my precious glossy, I was surprised to find a succinct abridgement of Emma's dance story spread boldly across the shirt—the first version of the now-famous slogan: "If I can't dance I don't want to be in your revolution."

I searched Emma's texts for the statement; it was nowhere to be found. But Jack was so pleased, the festival was so soon, Emma looked so lively printed in red and black on a variety of rich background colors, that I hadn't the heart to register an objection in the name of scholarship. After all, the apocrypha appeared on a mere gross or two of T-shirts, which surely could not require the same standards of accuracy as, say, book-reviews—and the sentiment expressed was pure Emma indeed.

But history (and fashion) exploded so quickly in those hungrily feminist days that the slogan on the original shirt-run was soon dispersed and copied and broadcast nationwide and abroad, underground and above, changing along the way like a child's game of Telephone, until Jack's initial lighthearted liberties had taken wing as quotable lore and soared up into the realms of myth.

ALIX KATES SHULMAN has written eleven books, including four novels, two memoirs, and two books on Emma Goldman. Her most recent book is *A Good Enough Daughter*, a memoir. A different version of this piece was published in Women's Review of Books, December 1991.

Peels

BY SHANI R. SOHN

Illustration by Caren Belle Loebel-Fried

"Have you ever lied to me?"

They were walking without speaking before he asked the question. He had absent-mindedly got ahead of her on the cement path, so he slowed and turned, walking backward until she caught up. Her blue eyes looked up at him.

"Careful," she pointed.

He turned again, side-stepping the break in the cement where the muddy earth had escaped. It was March and the ground was freshly thawed after a chilly winter in Israel. It was a Saturday, about three months since they had arrived—he from the United States and she from Canada—to volunteer temporarily on this kibbutz.

Saturday was their day off, and they had slept in. When she had finally opened her eyes that morning, he was already awake, sitting up in bed beside her, peeling a grapefruit. A pale thread of the inner rind fell to his chest, into the dark curls.

Lynn stopped blinking and, puffy with sleep, smiled up at his silhouette, the familiar shape of hair and beard lit at the edges by the window behind him. She pushed the hair off her face with one hand, stretching and turning on her side. A hint of damp soil breezed through the window, mingling with the scent of the fruit.

Andy held a segment in front of her mouth and as she took it between her lips, she tasted his fingers and remembered them inside her the night before.

"It's so quiet. Is it early?" she asked, sitting up and picking the stray piece of rind from his chest. She was naked and sat straight so her stomach wouldn't fold.

"It's late," he said, still chewing. "Everyone's at lunch. Let's go for a walk."

They washed at the sink and pulled on their heavy cotton shirts, khaki pants, and work boots. Three steps off the porch took them out of the shade, then they walked across the grass to the volleyball court and climbed the bleachers. From the highest bench they could see the huge green field stretching out to the citrus groves. The crop was bending toward them; the few clouds moved in the same direction. The sky looked exactly Peacock Blue to her—number seven in the Laurentian pencil crayon set she had used as a kid, not really so long ago.

"God, it's pretty," she said. "What's growing in the field?"

"I think it's wheat," he said. "A guy I work with in the chicken house told me—Are you doing that on purpose with your eyes?"

"What?" she asked, then realized. "Oh." She looked away. "No, I don't do it on purpose. I had an operation but they still go off sometimes. Kids in school used to call me names." She sighed. "And they never let me play in any reindeer games."

A breeze came up, the corner of his collar lifting, green wedge on brown beard, then dropping again when he turned to look at her. They were straddling the bench, facing each other.

"They made fun of me too," he said.

"What's to make fun of?"

"The way I talk," he said. "I sounded funny. Nike niss. I nalk nike niss."

He looked away and she stopped laughing.

"You really talked like that? Did they give you speech therapy?"

"I had an operation too," he said. "On my mouth." He looked down from the bleachers, watching the other volunteers straggle back from lunch.

She slid forward on the bench, draping her legs over his and, reaching behind him, fit her open palms to his back. She rubbed her nose through his beard along the curve of his chin and kissed his neck below his left ear.

"Let's get something to eat," she whispered.

He cupped her jaw in his hand, thumb on one cheek, fingers on the other, squeezing just enough to collapse her lips in an exaggerated pucker. He kissed her contorted mouth, then stood up and they started for the dining hall.

After walking awhile without speaking he asked, "Have you ever lied to me?"

"Careful," she pointed to the mud. "Not that I'm aware of. What did you think I lied about?"

"Nothing," he said. "God, I'm hungry. Did I tell you Howard's story? The one about his uncle in the tuxedo business? This is priceless. His uncle puts in a cummerbund order —"

"Oh."

"What?"

"Have *you* ever lied to *me*?" she asked.

"Yes. So he orders the cummerbunds and -"

"Cut it out, Andy. What did you lie to me about?"

"You Canadians are so adorable, the way you say out and about. You have to guess."

Chicken soup. How else could you explain that hairy chest?

"You're a bright person, Andy—bright enough, I think, to realize what an asshole you are. Am I right?"

"Okay, I'm an asshole. But you still have to guess. Hasn't there been anything that made you wonder about me?"

"Oh, I know. Last night—you were faking it." She gave a wide-eyed, open-mouthed smile, which he ignored.

"It's not personal like that," he said. "This is something I've lied about to everybody. The whole kibbutz."

"Everybody?"

"You don't have to guess right away. Think about it." He held the glass door open and she walked into the empty dining hall.

The food had already been removed from the serving area, but one of the women in the kitchen, smiling shyly from under her plucked eyebrows, told them to wait and came back with two plates of food. She nodded at their thanks, adjusting her hair net.

He must have lied to *her*, Lynn thought, if he lied to everybody on the kibbutz. But he's never said more than two words to this woman. He's never spoken at all to some people here. How do you lie to people without speaking to them?

"Thanks." She took the coffee from him and they chose a table in the middle of the large sunny room. It was quiet except for the occasional clatter of aluminum pots, spraying water, and the muffled voices of the kitchen crew.

He was talking about Howard again. Lynn stirred her coffee and smiled when he did. She wondered why he was making her guess. To make her think about him? To make himself seem mysterious? To make it seem like a game instead of a lie?

"What?" he said, drawing back as she reached for his face.

"You've got food in your beard." She brushed something from his chin and asked, "Does your mother make matzo brei?"

"Matzo what?"

"Matzo brei," Lynn smiled. "You know, the stuff you're shoveling in your mouth right now?"

He took a long time swallowing.

"No," he finally answered. "She doesn't like to cook." He looked at his plate and stabbed a wedge of cantaloupe with his fork.

"That can't be true," Lynn said, her face expressionless.

He put his fork down.

"You were obviously raised on a steady diet of home-made chicken soup." She smirked. "How else could you explain that hairy chest?"

He smiled thinly and asked, "More coffee?"

She watched him walk away between the tables, holding the empty cups in front of him. Nike niss, she remembered. I nalk nike niss. Was that the lie? There had really never been anything wrong with his mouth. He'd just made it up to get sympathy. No, it was something he lied about to everyone. It would have to be something about the general impression they had of him. But what impression do they have that isn't true? How do they see Andy?

The door at the north end of the building opened and one of the older kibbutzniks stepped in. He walked slowly to the mail boxes, taking off his sun hat and rubbing the bald spot at the back of his head. After scanning the envelopes, he pushed them into his hip pocket and, returning to the door, glanced at Andy, who was now walking back to the table with two full cups.

Lynn wondered what this old man saw when he looked at Andy. The old man looks and he sees one of the volunteers. Lynn rubbed the back of her head and turned to look at Andy. A nice boy. A nice, Jewish, American boy. So where's the lie? He's not really a boy? He's not really American?"

As Andy sat down Lynn said, "You're not Jewish."

"Why do you say that?" He looked up at her while he mopped at the spilled coffee with a paper napkin.

She studied his face and smiled. "I'm right, aren't I? That's the lie. You're not really Jewish."

He was looking over his shoulder. "Keep your voice

Hasn't there been anything that made you wonder about me?

down. No," he said, turning back to look at her, "I'm not Jewish. But what made you think that? What is it about me that made you think I wasn't Jewish? The way I talk?"

"No, actually, it's the way you walk."

She was surprised when he asked, "Really?"

"Of course not. I don't think I ever would have suspected it if you hadn't told me there was something you had lied about to the whole kibbutz."

"But why did you think it was that in particular? It could have been something else."

"Not really. I knew it had to be something about the general impression you give—a nice, Jewish, American boy. Well, given last night, I'm sure you're a boy. And I know you're really American because that obnoxious sense of superiority is too hard to put on. And—"

"I shouldn't have given you such a big clue. Wasn't there anything before that made you wonder about me? If I wasn't Jewish?"

"I don't think so." She monitored herself as they stared at each other. Yes, her impression of him was shifting. Without thinking about it, she had assumed things—that he had grown up with certain foods and certain words in his house; that he had watched a freshly ironed white tablecloth billowing out to cover the table on Friday nights; that he knew what it felt like to be taunted. Well, he did know that. Maybe not for being a Jew, but for being different. For talking funny. She watched the napkin twisting in his callused hands.

"Are you angry at me?" he asked. "Do you feel the same about me?" He closed his eyes and whispered, "Say something."

She had never seen him look worried like this. Did he really think it would make such a difference? He was the same person now as he was before; he had the same feelings and ideas; he was still Andy. Did he really think it would make such a difference to her?

"Of course I feel the same about you, Andy. I still think you're an asshole."

The coffee cup blocked most of his smile. His shoulders lowered. "No, really. It must make a difference to you," he said.

"Well, it does sort of change the way I see you—No, listen. Certain impressions about how you grew up, like maybe that you hunted for eggs instead of for matzo. These things make a difference—but not an important difference."

He looked doubtful.

"Andy, anything I like or don't like about you has nothing to do with whether you're Jewish or not," she said. "Really. I can't detect anything in me that's troubled by this news."

"You're not angry?"

"No, just confused. Why did you lie about it?"

He put his cup down. "I heard that Jewish volunteers are given preferential treatment and I didn't want to spend time here—learning the language and getting my knuckles pecked off by stupid chickens—if I wasn't going to be taken seriously."

"They treat everybody the same here, don't they?"

"I don't think so. Just little things, like when they had one spot left on the bus last week for that trip and a few people wanted to go, remember? Peter wanted to go, but they picked Jeff."

"But that doesn't—"

"I know it doesn't prove anything, but a bunch of little things like that seem to add up. Not just the kibbutz—the volunteers too. The other day, I'm sitting around with Howard and Peter, and Howard starts in with this teasing. You know, making Jewish references and sort of implying that Peter just wouldn't understand certain things."

"Good old Howard," she shook her head.

"What? Anyway, I didn't want to be an outsider."

"Well then why did you come to Israel in the first place?"

"I like it." He shrugged. "It's an interesting place and—I think it's an interesting place. Let's walk."

The wind had died down; the sun was shining from the west.

"Hide-and-seek time," she said, tucking her hair behind her ears.

He raised his eyebrows, waiting for an explanation.

"We used to play hide-and-seek on my street. This is the perfect weather and time of day because the long shadows make it harder. You have to find something big enough to hide you and your own shadow."

She couldn't tell if he was smiling at her or just squinting from the sun, so she put her hand up to block the light from shining in his eyes. He kept smiling.

"Unless Danny Meyer was it," she continued. "Danny was the worst seeker. You could stand right behind him and he wouldn't catch on. Don't laugh, it was sad. Was that our last grapefruit this morning?"

"Yeah. Maybe the crates are still out."

They walked to the back of the building where a meter-high crate of grapefruits and another of oranges were left for people to help themselves. Both were almost empty. Andy took a few grapefruits and Lynn picked out some oranges, then they headed back along the path to the volunteers' area.

"And what?" she asked. "You said you came to Israel because it was interesting and something else you didn't finish saying."

He examined a grapefruit. "You know the lie I told you?"

"Yeah."

"It's not exactly a lie."

"What do you mean? And don't you dare tell me I have to guess."

"It's not exactly a lie because I really do feel Jewish."

"What does this mean? In what way do you feel Jewish?"

"I relate to Jews, to Jewish attitudes. I grew up with mostly Jewish friends. I gravitate to Jews."

"Why?"

"I don't know, Lynn. I just do. I feel more comfortable with Jews than with non-Jews."

She gave a short laugh. "You mean if I told you I wasn't Jewish, you'd dump me?"

"But you *are* Jewish," he said.

Her eyebrows lifted.

"What do you mean, 'But you *are* Jewish'? I just spent half an hour assuring you it doesn't matter that you *aren't*. You're joking, right? You wouldn't really consider dumping me for not being Jewish, would you?"

"Well, it makes a difference. You are who you are partly because you are Jewish."

She returned his smile and said, "What makes you think I'm Jewish, Andy? I never said I was, did I?"

You have to find something big enough to hide you and your own shadow.

They were walking through the children's playground, past reclining teeter-totters and empty swings. He stopped in front of the slide that looked like a stone castle, and adjusted his armload of fruit, looking at her.

"Are you Jewish or not?" The next time, he yelled. "Are you Jewish?"

Lynn stared at him a few seconds, then she turned and walked on without answering. She saw the grapefruit just before it smacked into her shoulder. Oranges thudded on the gravel as she swung toward him, tightly grabbing her right arm.

"That hurt, you jackass." So what if he looks sorry, she thought. The goddamn jackass thinks he's so cool, so likable, so unique to feel like a Jew. He's not anti-Semitic like some other people. No, no, no. "You're not anti-Semitic like some other people, Andy. No siree. In fact, you're so anti-anti-Semitic, you feel just like one of the gang, don't you?"

He was beside her now, helping her pick up the fruit she had dropped.

"In fact, you want to be one of the gang so much, I just bet when Howard was making those stupid comments at Peter's expense, you were laughing right along with him, just like—"

"Lower your voice. Look, I'm sorry I threw the grapefruit. It was dumb. I'm sorry, but, Jesus, what are you going so crazy about?"

Her pulse filled her ears as she walked the rest of the way to their room.

After they dropped the fruit on the desk, she picked up the one with the split skin and started peeling it, staring out the window with her lips together and the heat spreading up to her eyes. Andy sat on the bed.

"Come here, Lynn. Come here and talk to me," he said, guiding her by the wrist to sit on his lap.

She pulled away gently but he held her in place, so she pulled harder, breaking his grip. She sat sideways on the chair by the desk, facing him, still peeling the grapefruit.

"You're not religious," she finally said. "It's not the religion you're attracted to. So why is it so important to you whether I'm Jewish or not?"

"It's hard to explain, Lynn. It's a cultural thing—cultural values, attitudes about family, education—"

"Lots of people have good values, Andy. Who I am has little to do with the fact that I'm a Jew. Half the other young Jewish women you meet will be different from me in —"

Andy slapped his leg. "I knew you were Jewish," he said, grinning at her.

"Oh, please," she closed her eyes for a second, then grabbed a tissue from the box beside the bed and folded it on the desk, setting down the skinned fruit. She dropped the peel in the trash.

"Look," she said. "This is like some twisted form of racism. It's —"

"Oh, come on, Lynn. You are really blowing this thing out of proportion. The fact that I enjoy being with Jewish people does not make me a racist."

"You're right; it doesn't. But the fact that you would consider dumping me when you thought I wasn't Jewish—even though I was the same person, with the same feelings and ideas, standing in front of you—"

He shook his head, laughing, as he walked over and put his arms around her.

"I was not going to dump you, Lynn. I have no intention of dumping you, so stop worrying. Okay?"

She turned her face away from him, touching her cheek to his shoulder. "That's not what I'm worried about. Tell me the truth. If it had turned out I wasn't a Jew, would your arms be around me right now? Am I getting preferential treatment? Tell me the truth."

"Look, we're just going in circles now. Can't we drop this?" He held her chin up and lightly kissed her lips. "Come on. There isn't much sun left. Let's go out."

"I'll be there soon," she said. "I want to brush my hair and put on a sweater."

Lynn stood, kneeling one leg on the bed, watching him through the window. He walked down the three steps off the porch and headed across the courtyard to the group of volunteers sitting on the lawn by the wall of the opposite building. Some were writing letters. Others were talking or playing backgammon, soaking up the last strong rays of the day.

As Andy got closer to the group, his shadow, preceding him, reached the edge of the grass and angled up the wall. It stayed there a few seconds, the familiar shape of hair and beard and rolled sleeves, until he sat down, pulling his shadow onto the grass with the others.

SHANI SOHN is a copy editor, desktop publisher, and website designer in Toronto. "Peels" is her first short story.

CAREN LOEBEL-FRIED's block prints have appeared on book and CD covers. She is currently writing and illustrating a book on ancient legends of the guardian spirits of Hawaii. CBLF@msn.com

Lilith As Map

I started reading Lilith one year ago this month. A friend bought a copy for me after I told her I had made the decision to convert to Judaism. Throughout my conversion process, I looked forward to each new issue. Four issues later, my conversion is complete and next week I will celebrate my adult bat mitzvah. Lilith has inspired me, educated me, and made me aware of resources available to me as a Jewish woman.Thanks, Lilith, for helping me along my journey. I plan to take you along with me, where ever my path takes me from here.

Dawn Capone
West Deptford, NJ

Forgiveness—At Any Price?

One would think that the thesis of Susan Schnur's piece "Beyond Forgiveness," [Fall 2001] would be self evident, but unfortunately it is not. Pervasively indoctrinated with a conservative bias against independence and truth speaking, we are constantly bombarded with the virtue of making peace. Peace at any price. I commend her for the courage and clear thinking it took to articulate her position. From my perspective, it cannot be repeated often enough.

Diana Shahmoon
via e-mail

THE ARTICLE "Beyond Forgiveness" thoroughly resonates with me. It is something I have been arguing for years, both on a personal and a "political" level. I have a real problem with the entire high holy day litany of *ashamnu, bagadnu* [we are guilty, we have betrayed] and with ancient Israel taking responsibility for her having been abused by God and the nations. The fact that we include *mipnei hataeinu galinu meartzenu* [for our sins we have been exiled from our land] in the holiday prayers as the reason for being banished by God distresses me.

On the personal level, I was in my fifties when my older sister told me that my mother occasionally beat me with a belt when I was very little. I decided not to confront her. I felt that she was too old (she lived until she was almost 90) and that this was something too painful for me to rake over with her. It was, on some level, a decision not to forgive her and not to come to some sort of resolution. I still don't know if I made the right choice—but your article validated my decision (or was it indecision) and gave me some terminology to express it.

Naomi Graetz
Be'ersheva, Israel

About Jewish Women's Eggs

I AM A 38 YEAR OLD Jewish woman who struggled through 3 and a half years of infertility. Through in-vitro fertilization my husband and I conceived our amazing and wonderful daughter, now 22 months old. Unlike the women you describe in "Jewish Women's Eggs: A Hot Commodity in the IVF Market Place" [Fall 2001], I was fortunate in that I was able to use my own eggs and my husband's sperm.

In the article, IVF is defined "as a process whereby eggs are 'harvested' from a younger donor (whose eggs have a better chance of producing a successful pregnancy) and fertilized in a lab by sperm, possibly from the woman's own partner." This description misrepresents IVF. Many, if not most, women/couples who go through IVF do so with their own eggs and sperm. It is only when a woman is unable to produce mature follicles/eggs or has an inability to respond to the follicle stimulating drugs that an egg donor would be considered.

I write this on behalf of myself and all the other women/couples who have babies through IVF who are of their own genetic egg and sperm. While this article raises very important information and issues with respect to infertility and egg donor options, to define IVF incorrectly is disrespectful to the women and men who have conceived their children through this process.

Eileen Stein
Seattle, WA

Do Not Dominate Others

A TSENA RENA resource item in the Summer 2001 issue suggests that a "free fly fishing retreat," where participants can enjoy "peace, quiet and nature," might be an appropriate activity for women recovering from breast surgery.

Fishing might bring these women less peace and quiet if they were aware that it causes terrible pain to the fish. Fish hooks tear the mouth of the fish again and again as the creature struggles to break free. Finally, it is dragged out of the water, all bloody, to die of suffocation.

To cause pain to any living creature is against the Jewish law against *tzaar ba'alei chaim* (suffering of animals). It is also contrary of the feminist ethic of refraining from exercising domination over others—adult humans of either gender, children, animals, and, yes, fish.

Aviva Cantor
New York, NY

Supporting Our Gender-Variant Children

I WAS GLAD TO SEE the article "Jewish Mothers, Gay Sons" [Spring 2001]. Our Jewish culture has such strong messages about how kids are supposed to grow up (comfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth, heterosexual, married) that when something else happens, both parents and kids need support in adjusting to the way things are.

I would like to call attention to an issue raised by Sarah Epstein in her article. The behavioral cues that she used to convince readers and herself that her son was gay were all based on stereotypically female behaviors. She noted that her son preferred the company of girls to that of boys, that he was careful, that he helped in the garden and that he liked to dress up in her jewelry. Epstein chided herself not to "stereotype," by which she meant not to employ the stereotype that all men with feminine characteristics are gay. However, it was exactly these behaviors that led her to assert that "It was at that moment, when David was seven, trying on my beads in front of the mirror, that I suddenly, absolutely knew that David was gay."

Not only does this reinforce a stereotype that all boys with feminine behavior will grow up to be gay, but it supports the gender-binary and heterosexist notion that our sexual orientation is based on attraction between "opposites," i.e. that someone with a female gender identity is most likely going to be attracted to a man.

I'd like Jewish parents out there to know that you may have gender variant children who are gay, straight or bisexual. You may have a gender variant child who is simply more comfortable with behavior or activities typically associated with children of the other sex, or you may have a child who is transgender. Jewish children, like all children, deserve to grow up in families and a culture that gives them room to be who ever they are, as it sounds like Epstein did. I just couldn't let slide her conflation of gender and sexual orientation.

Margaret Rothman
San Francisco, CA
[Coordinator, LGBT Outreach, Jewish Family & Children's Services (415) 449-1228]

Women and Judaism in Poland

ALTHOUGH I READ with interest Shana Penn's "Warsaw Diary: Democracy in the Balance" [Winter 2000], I also wish to clarify some ofher claims about Bejt Warszawa, the newly formed liberal Jewish community in the capital city.

I concede that available religious materials are sorely inadequate. The Polish translations are apparently quite antiquated and inaccurate. Even the transliterations need to be re-worked for the benefit of Polish readers. The Lauder Foundation, working with the only existing synagogue in the city and other Orthodox-based programs throughout the country, have funded a Polish siddur project, but a Polish/Hebrew Tanakh does not yet exist, nor do other holiday materials. All the new materials being created are non-egalitarian [with women excluded].

Ms. Penn is correct when stating the lack of outside interest and funding for more liberal Judaic programming in Poland. Autonomy for reemerging Jewish communities can only be achieved with initial external support. Until non-Orthodox denominations show a commitment, modern-day Poland will only know one denomination of Judaism. When I speak professionally about my recent rabbinic experiences in Warsaw, I remind my audiences that before the war, The Great Synagogue on Tlomackie Street was a liberal synagogue.

When it was bombed in 1943, photographs show that one of its external side menorahs remained undamaged. Looking at the photographs in the city's Jewish Historical Institute, I see the surviving menorah as a symbol that the light of Judaism has not been extinguished. Nevertheless, the light of liberal Judaism needs a lot of help to be rekindled. In 2001, there is a hunger for alternative expressions of Judaism, but advances in learning can only go so far without available materials and teachers. Bejt Warszawa's organizers have exciting ideas and great plans, but they need external direction as well.

Many Jewish male and female voices are singing together in Warsaw, but so far, the outside non-Orthodox world is not listening.

Cynthia A. Culpeper, Rabbi
Birmingham, AL

Lessons in Breast Appreciation

I HAVE SPENT A lot of time thinking about the essays on "How Jewish Women Feel About Their Breasts" [Spring 2000]. It seems to me that these articles bring two issues into sharp focus. Americans still seem to feel that the optimal body image is the so called "WASP" figure of a tall, slim, athletic girl. In this age of multiculturalism, isn't it time to admit that *she* is the minority? The other issue involves how we raise our daughters. Your writers struggled with their emerging sexuality and their changing bodies. Time to teach our young daughters that sexuality is OK even when sexual activity is not. Young women should be able to feel good about their bodies no matter what shape they are.

Joanne Glass
Highland Park, IL

I WAS SADDENED to read your articles about breasts. So much attention paid to a fleeting subject. I am a Jewish woman in my 40's, and I've lost my big, soft, cushy breasts to breast cancer. I have mourned them and have been forced by circumstances to "move on." Your article reminded me of how much I enjoyed hugging my children to my bosom. Here's some advice from a Jewish woman who once had"boobs" of her own: don't complain, philosophize, or think for a second that you are "not enough" because of your breasts. Revel that you are alive, that you are Jewish and that the world is full of possibilities.

Leslie Topus
Columbia, MD

Women in Israel's Army

YOU NEVER KNOW where the feminist education that you try to instill in your children might take them...

My daughter enlisted in the Israeli Army last November, giving her feminist mother great pride (and her Jewish mother a lot of anxiety!). She decided to join a first-of-its-kind unit in the Combat Corps, in which men and women get the same training and fulfill the same combat tasks. Their mission is to protect and patrol the "peace borders" with Jordan and Egypt.

My daughter has many stories. She and the other female soldiers had to convince their officers that they really do need more toilet paper than the weekly allocation! On a more serious note, the army has also had to deal with forming new rules about relationships between men and women in these units, and with the protests of religious factions uncomfortable with the co-ed arrangement.

The lessons that my daughter is learning now will be valuable to her in the future, and this experience will open up many doors for her and for the other young women serving with her.

Jodi Groberg Hodrov
Kibbutz Machanayim, Israel

Don't Censor Yourself!

BY MEREDITH TAX

"EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED." True, in that Americans now share the same insecurity and fear as people living in less protected parts of the globe.

Living in the U.S., barraged by news of anthrax-poisoned envelopes, it is difficult to be aware of any threat other than terrorists. But now as never before Americans must understand the costs of current political and economic decisions.

War always brings a danger of self-censorship by people who think silence is the best way to support their country. This is a particular danger for women, since one of the first things to vanish in wartime are the voices of women. How many women have you heard in major media coverage of the war? There are a few poster girls in uniform bravely leaving their children—and the victims, the bereaved of the World Trade Center and the Afghani women, muffled in black burqas.

Seeing the conditions of Afghani women, many Americans have responded by feeling anything is justified to help them. We don't yet know how much this war going to help the women of Afghanistan in the long run? If that was our government's aim, they've had plenty of other opportunities; feminists have been saying for years that Afghanistan was a human rights disaster. Did anybody listen? The United States government virtually created the Taliban, with help from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, where women are forbidden by law even to learn how to drive.

British poster warns against intelligence risks of prosititution, from *War and Gender* by Joshua S. Goldstein, 2001

During a war, voices for peace—or even of moderation—are often called traitors, and women are considered unqualified to speak except as mothers or victims. And our leaders are talking of a "new Cold War" that will last many years. I am old enough to remember the First Cold War. I remember the way we kids were terrorized by air raid drills; the sirens would scream and we would have to kneel against the wall in the school basement or get under our desks. This was called "civil defense," as in "homeland defense." Anybody who watched TV knew how much your desk would protect you from a nuclear attack. But nobody said so, for this was the McCarthy era and you weren't supposed to think for yourself.

Now the repression is starting again. Listening in on privileged conversations between a prisoner and his or her lawyer. Secret military tribunals. The limitations on war news released to the national media, and the media's own willingness to self-censor. Censorship is an enemy of the very democratic values the current military effort is supposed to defend.

The organization of which I'm president, the Women's World Network for Rights, Literature and Development (www.wworld.org), deals with gender and censorship. We are tracking the global and local effects of the "war on terrorism" on feminists' freedom of speech and organization. Some danger signs already noted:

Women in Black is a global feminist network of local women who organize weekly vigils against war, dressed in black. The idea started in Israel, spread to Serbia when war began in the former Yugoslavia, and has since been adopted in other countries. The Israeli and Serbian groups were nominated this year for the Nobel Peace Prize. Yet on Sept. 24, Kate Raphael, a member of Women in Black in San Francisco, was called by the FBI and asked to come in for questioning about whom she knew in the Middle East. Is it possible that the FBI is unaware of the deep contempt all religious fundamentalists have for women? Or are they simply using the "war against terrorism" to fish for information about their old enemy, the peace movement?

Look at the uproar about Susan Sontag's comparatively mild criticisms in The New Yorker and Barbara Kingsolver's San Francisco Chronicle op-eds against the rightwing misuse of patriotism. In Canada, Sunera Thobani, a women's studies professor at the University of British Columbia, made a speech at a Vancouver conference on violence against women for which she was trashed in the press as a "hate-monger." While she had expressed grief for the World Trade Center victims and solidarity with the women of Afghanistan, she also addressed the history of U.S. foreign policy in Africa, Asia and Latin America and said the result of this war would be an increase in violence against women.

Such attacks are designed to create an atmosphere of intimidation in which it becomes difficult or impossible for women to speak out critically.

You can evade censorship by going outside regular media channels; websites like www.commondreams.org, www.alternet.org, and www.peacewomen.org are alternate sources of information. Fight censorship by speaking up, no matter what your opinion. Write letters to legislators and to the papers. Call the media. Most important of all, talk to your neighbors and friends about politics. The women of Afghanistan lost their public voice; let's not let the "war on terrorism" take ours.

MEREDITH TAX is the author of *The Rising of the Women: Feminist Solidarity and Class Conflict, 1880-1917* (1980), two historical novels, *Rivington Street* (1982) and *Union Square* (1988), and a children's book, *Families* (1981).

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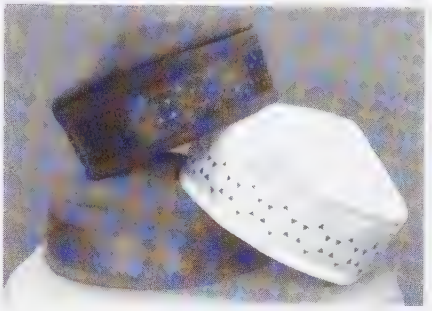

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WOMEN'S HISTORY, OLD AND NEW

Lesbian Rabbis: The First Generation edited by Rebecca T. Alpert, Sue Levi Elwell, Shirley Idelson, Rutgers University Press, $24

In 1972, Sally Priesand graduated from Reform Judaism's Hebrew Union College and became the first woman to receive *smikha* (ordination) from a rabbinical school. Priesand threw open the heavy doors of tradition, and the dreams and rabbinic aspirations of countless women and girls flooded out. Although the HUC leadership performed a just and courageous act, they were hardly prepared for the consequences. After all, where there are women, there are lesbians, and lesbians in the rabbinate was an issue that Jewish leadership was clearly not prepared for.

Lesbian Rabbis: The First Generation gives voice to the women who followed Priesand in making history: the lesbians who marched bravely into an unfriendly sea and forced an open passage. In eighteen personal essays, their stories emerge as joyous, heartbreaking, and historical, outlining where Judaism has been and mapping where the future lies.

"Women can be rabbis, and rabbis can be queer"

This book could just as well have contained eighty essays as eighteen. "Every Jewish act is a political act," writes Sidney Mintz. Simply being a Jew, or a woman, or a lesbian, can and must be seen as political. Encompassing all three is downright revolutionary, and Judaism is blessed to abound with such revolutionaries. But missing here are the stories of bisexual and transgendered rabbis, as well as those in Israel, or who work in settings other than movement leadership and congregations. The focus is on the experiences of Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis, with just three essays by graduates of the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary. Given the Seminary's and the movement's track record on the topic, it goes without saying that these three essays are devastating, enraging, and encouraging all at the same time.

As a young Jewish woman, I grew up well aware of the battle scars my elders bore to ensure a place for women in America, in Judaism, in the clergy. As a lesbian with very serious aspirations to the rabbinate, I found my foremothers anew in these stories. Writing of her work on college campuses, Shirley Idelson notes that "what distinguishes this new generation from all those who came before are their assumptions—the *of course* women can be rabbis, and *of course* rabbis can be queer." I was grateful, reading, not only to be a part of the new generation, but also to have finally found the names and voices at which to direct my gratitude.

ARIELLE DERBY

Lower East Side Memories by Hasia R. Diner, Princeton University Press, $27.95

The Girls: Jewish Women of Brownsville, Brooklyn, 1940-1995 by Carole Bell Ford, State University of New York Press, $18.95

Lower East Side Memories examines American Jewish perceptions of the Lower East Side, and the ways in which our understanding of this neighborhood has evolved over time. The area, which from the 1880s through the 1920s housed more Jews than any other place in America before or since, certainly deserves the prominent place assigned to it by historians. Yet Hasia Diner argues convincingly that popular veneration of the Lower East Side is based not only on the historical reality of the neighborhood as a center of Jewish life and culture, but also on the situation of American Jewry after WWII. As they confronted the destruction of Europe's Jewish communities, and experienced rapid socioeconomic and geographic mobility, American Jews needed a "place of origin," a source of values and authenticity. The Lower East Side, Diner asserts, served this purpose.

In Brownsville, however, Jews composed a larger percentage of the population than they ever did on the Lower East Side (an estimated 95% in 1923). "The historical irony here," according to Diner, "is that Brownsville was actually more thoroughly Jewish, at least in terms of proportions, than the Lower East Side ever was. Yet the Lower East Side has come to be a repository of American Jewish memories on a grand scale."

There are at least two historical surveys that attest to Brownsville's formative role in the development of its youth; however, these studies treat the experience of young men as normative and pay hardly any attention to their female counterparts. Carole Bell Ford's *The Girls* focuses on the lives of the women who grew up in Brownsville in the 1940s and 1950s. Based on interviews and other sources, Ford describes the aspirations and achievements of these women, who came to maturity before the women's movement. She found that, though the women did valuable volunteer work for political and charitable organizations, they had limited educational and occupational options. Most took commercial courses in high school (on the advice of parents and teachers), worked at clerical jobs until they married or had their first child, and then assumed full-time homemaking responsibilities. (In the 1950s, more women attended college, though many dropped out before graduating.)The author herself is one of these "girls," and her realistic portrait of the neighborhood was corroborated by my own mother, who also lived in Brownsville during those years.

Ford's book illuminates how political events, social class, ethnicity, religious values, gender role expectations and neighborhood culture shape the lives of women. Along with Diner's insightful analysis, it enriches our understanding of Jewish women's experience in America.

[Reviewer's note: My mother, Sybil Sigman, who grew up in Brownsville and shared her recollections of this vibrant Jewish neighborhood with me, passed away on September 5th. Zichronah livracha, *may her memory be for a blessing.]*

REENA SIGMAN FRIEDMAN

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Yentl's Revenge: The Next Wave of Jewish Feminism edited by Danya Ruttenberg, Seal Press, $16.95

When my friend Mara turned twenty-four, she asked everyone at her party for a piece of advice. "Pay attention to the margins," one woman told her. These words rang in my head as I read *Yentl's Revenge: The Next Wave of Jewish Feminism*, edited by Danya Ruttenberg. Ruttenberg, a Lilith contributing editor, has collected a wide spectrum of young Jewish women's voices, and Susannah Heschel, who broke similar ground eighteen years ago with her anthology *On Being a Jewish Feminist*, contributes the forward. Writes Heschel: "as a member of that first generation of women who raged and struggled and fought and wept, I thrill with the second generation and all those to come."

The torch of Jewish feminism is clearly being passed, and it is alight with passion, creative tensions and pride.

Thanks in large part to that first generation, whose struggle led to the fusion of Judaism and feminism, this next generation can explore the questions of just what it means to live with both identities. *Yentl's Revenge* treats us to essays on finding one's own way into Judaism through the creation of an egalitarian wedding ceremony, negotiating the challenges involved in "parenting as a religious Jewish feminist"—a particularly provocative contribution by Haviva Ner-David—and Ophira Edut's sharp, audacious "Tales of a Jewess with a Caboose." It's no longer solely about fighting for a place and a voice within Jewish tradition. Rather, the women of my generation unabashedly embrace and find strength in the diversity and contrasts of those places and voices.

And embrace them we do. Through page after page of *Yentl's Revenge*, the margins around what it is to be Jewish and feminist explode in wonderful, unexpected ways, unleashing new meanings everywhere. Ironically though, it was just such an explosion that brought me up short. When the title of Jennifer Bleyer's seamlessly written "From Riot Grrrl to Yeshiva Girl, or How I Learned to Be My Own Damn Rabbi" jumped out, the young Jewish feminist in me was at her side, applauding the challenging spirit behind her words. But the future rabbi in me felt banished to some hopelessly establishment place where I would never recognize myself.

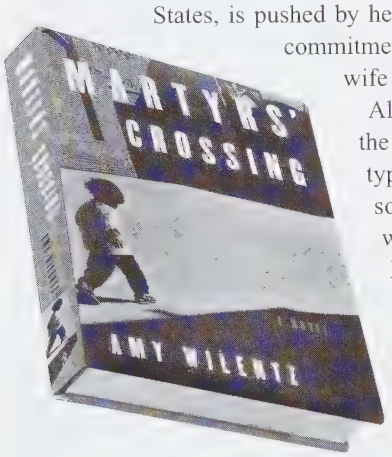
My friend's birthday advice might well serve as words of wisdom for the *Yentl's Revenge* generation as we continue the transformative dance of re-defining Jewish feminism and carrying it forward with pride.

REBECCA GUTTERMAN

Martyr's Crossing by Amy Wilentz, Simon & Schuster, $24.

A Palestinian mother tries to bring her sick toddler from the territories into Israel for medical help on a day when violence has prompted the Israelis to seal the border crossing. The Israeli soldier in charge hesitates, makes her wait, then disobeys orders and decides to let them through. But it is too late —Ibrahim dies at the checkpoint. His death triggers the plot of *Martyr's Crossing*. Rooted in the thick of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, Amy Wilentz has woven what might well be this morning's headlines into a tense page-turner of a novel.

Ibrahim is the son of a Palestinian leader and suspected terrorist imprisoned in an Israeli jail. Doron, the Israeli soldier who was in charge at the checkpoint, defies his superiors and begins a treacherous personal quest to pay penance to the child's mother Marina. Marina, born and raised in the United States, is pushed by her son's death to rethink her commitment to live in Palestine as the wife of a Palestinian leader.



All the principals involved in the plot avoid simple stereotypes. Racked with guilt, the soldier Doron sympathizes with the Palestinians. Marina, who knows Doron did his best to help her child, refuses to divulge his name.

Instead of catapulting Marina into extremism, her child's death fills her with ambiguities. "We all agree, but in the end, so what? What if we win? If you could establish a utopia on earth at the expense of the eternal suffering of one child and its mother, even a Zionist child and its mother, then Marina did not want that utopia." As her child's death becomes almost public property, Marina's private grief is poignantly drawn: "She was washing Ibrahim's clothes...His two blue jumpers, his blue jeans, the black sweatshirt with a Ninja Turtle on it...His bibs she had set aside because she couldn't bear to wash them just yet, his bibs, and the foot pajamas that still gave off the sweet smell of the sleeping child."

The "party hacks" of both Palestinians and Israelis, unsavory mirror images of each other, come off much worse than the sympathetic figures of Marina and Doron. The Palestinian is a corrupt politico who views the child's death as a weapon for political manipulation. Doron's single-minded commander is a cynical old-timer who believes in nothing but *realpolitik*.

Wilentz, an American writer who lived in Israel for several years as a correspondent for The New Yorker, has an acute eye for the country's details: "Doron hated the desert wind...it reminded you that Jerusalem, with its McDonald's and Burger Kings and nice red buses and nice red post offices and its nice green gardens...was actually right on the edge of an ancient desert where camels and cactuses and Bedouins were the only successful species."

While rooting for Wilentz' rich sympathetic characters, the reader knows all along that what began in tragedy cannot deliver a happy ending.

HELEN SCHARY MOTRO

Voices of the Religious Left: A Contemporary Sourcebook edited by Rebecca T. Alpert, Temple University Press, $27.95

Voices of the Religious Left: A Contemporary Sourcebook is chock-full of politically engaged, theologically and textually grounded essays. For a Jewish reader, the challenge and payoff are tripled: Some essays are written by Jews from a specifically Jewish point of view, some essays, though written by non-Jews, use our "half" of the Bible as sacred prooftext, and some, as with Robert Allan Warrior's "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," invite us to see our old familiar stories with new eyes and insights—for instance, from the perspective of the Canaanites whose land was conquered by the Israelites in the Exodus story.

This, I think, is part of the agenda of the anthology's editor, Temple University professor Rebecca Alpert—to show how our sacred texts ask more of us, intellectually, spiritually and politically, than we may have guessed. In "Pesach and the Palestinians," Rabbi Arthur Waskow asks, "What would it mean to respond to Hagar and Ishmael . . . with neither expulsion nor an effort to subject them to Israeli rule?" and then outlines several very concrete ways by which both individuals and the Israeli government might be able to consider an answer. The reader is prompted to think, spurred into action—or often, I think, both.

Spiritual ammunition...

Many of the essays also provide serious spiritual ammunition. Three examples: "Jews, Money and Social Responsibility," interpretations of the Leviticus laws against "lying with a man as with a woman"; and a brilliant look at the ways in which the Torah's Jubilee year could help regenerate our current economic and environmental crises.

Voices illuminates the ways some people have taken their sense of religious duty out into a broken world and infused their in-the-trenches *tikkun olam* with a relationship to the bigger picture. The magic here is both in the details—for instance, how the contemporary prison system violates the imperatives of Psalm 79:11—and in the sweeping sense that we are all, in fact, working toward the same goals from, as somebody once said, a thousand points of light. Until we can get there, *Voices of the Religious Left* offers indispensable, high-octane edification and inspiration—just what we'll need along the way.

DANYA RUTTENBERG

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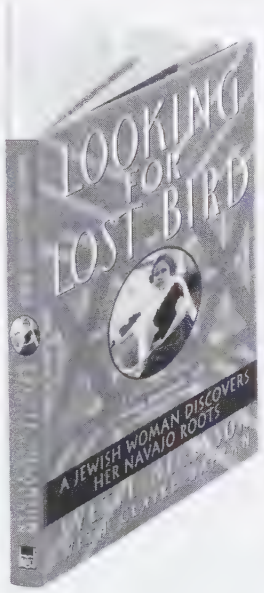
Another Desert: Jewish Poetry of New Mexico by Joan Logghe and Miriam Sagan, Sherman Asher, $15.

Looking for Lost Bird: A Jewish Woman Discovers Her Navajo Roots by Yvette Melanson with Claire Safran, Avon Books, $22

It is a sadly well-documented fact of history that Native American children have been systematically taken from their homes to be raised in the white world—taken to live in boarding schools, taken to non-Indian foster homes, taken for illegal adoption. In the Indian community these children are known as "Lost Birds," after the infant survivor of Wounded Knee who never knew her family of birth.



Yvette Melanson is one of these Lost Birds. Brought up in an affluent Jewish home in Queens, Melanson always knew she was adopted. But it wasn't until she began researching her roots via the Internet that she ever considered the possibility that she was Native American. After making contact with a Navajo family whose story matched up with her own, Melanson decides to move from Maine to Arizona, with her husband and two children in tow.

How Melanson integrates her past identity—wealthy, Jewish, urbanized, white—with her new one—poor, rural, Indian, but still Jewish—is at the heart of the book. As a "newly-minted Indian" she struggles to make a new life for herself and her family. She learns to weave, starts an online business selling handcrafts from her community at Tolani Lake, experiences traditional Navajo ceremonies, and helps her husband and children as they deal with their particularly ambiguous places in the world of the reservation.

Melanson never takes a blood test to determine whether or not she is in fact related to the Navajo family which embraces her. In some ways, the story being told here shows that the medical truth is unimportant in the face of real familial feeling and love. However, the evidence presented for the truthfulness of Melanson's claim may leave some skeptical readers unsatisfied. For others, perhaps especially those seeking their families of origin, the palpable emotional satisfaction the various characters receive from their new relationships will be an affirmation.

Another Desert: Jewish Poetry of New Mexico also situates a Jewish presence in the Southwest. An anthology even non-poetry fans might enjoy, these poems use readily understandable structures and images, and the five sections address explicitly Jewish concerns (Diaspora, Holy Days & Blessings, Ancestors, Kaddish, Conversos). The range of contributor backgrounds is wide, draw-

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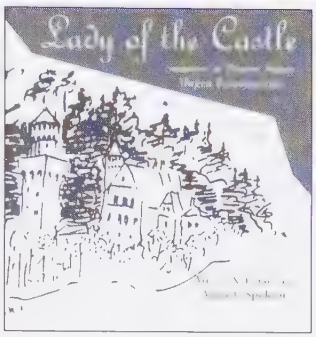

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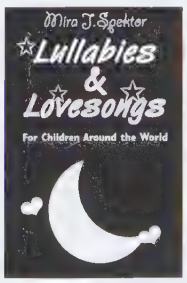

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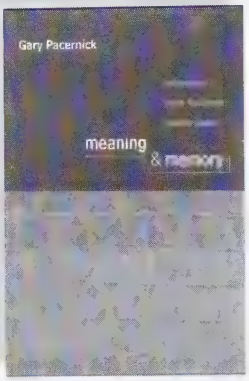

Meaning and Memory
Interviews with Fourteen Jewish Poets
Gary Pacernick

Is any poet born a Jew, a Jewish poet, or must one incorporate Jewish text and sources to be considered a Jewish poet?

Pacernick searches for answers and for an understanding of this particular experience. The interviews look at the lives and work of a diverse group of fourteen important contemporary writers, including poet laureate **Stanley Kunitz**, Pulitzer Prize winner **Philip Levine**, **Alicia Ostriker**, **Allen Ginsberg**, **Denise Levertov**, and **David Ignatow**. Other poets included are **Carl Rakosi**, **Dannie Abse**, **Harvey Shapiro**, **Gerald Stern**, **Elaine Feinstein**, **Ruth Fainlight**, **Marge Piercy**, and **Irena Klepfisz**.

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ing across denominational backgrounds and including Jews by choice and descendants of Conversos, so that bits of Spanish, Ladino, Hebrew, and Yiddish are scattered throughout the texts. Spanish-language poems have side-by-side English translations. This anthology is particularly successful in building an integrated whole, partially because of the thematic connections, and partially because of a common Southwestern imagery—candles at night, "dusk on grey sandstone," silken shawls, "fiery tips of poplars," throwing crumbs into the Rio Grande on Rosh HaShanah. Thematically, the eternal Jewish themes of exile, searching, and longing cut across these poems, even while the poets affirm their Jewish lives and identities in an unlikely but beautiful land.

TERREN ILANA WEIN

Fighting to Become Americans: Jews, Gender, and the Anxiety of Assimilation by Riv-Ellen Prell, Beacon Press, $28.50.

Riv-Ellen Prell's study of Jewish gender stereotypes reveals how American Jews played out their social and cultural anxieties on the bodies of women (and sometimes on male bodies as well.) Drawing on decades of cultural images in the Jewish press, American Jewish fiction, popular music and memoirs, Prell develops a unique theory of Jewish assimilation into the melting pot of America. More importantly, she shows the historical development of the stereotypes that still shadow contemporary American Jews.

Prell uses gender images to highlight two important aspects of American Jewish life. First, American Jews have always been uneasy about their place in a country that paid lip service to pluralism but was itself mainly Christian and ambivalent about "others" in its midst. Second, Americanization and class mobility made different demands on men and women. These demands influenced Jews to create gender identities that reflected their acculturation (or lack of it) into American life.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, class and gender anxieties about a new type of Jewish woman—"Eastern European immigrant, urban, working class, and seemingly unencumbered by family responsibilities"—led to the creation of the Ghetto Girl stereotype. With her made-up face, over-dressed body, loud voice and desire for luxuries, the Ghetto Girl was invoked and criticized by Jews and non-Jews alike in the media, drama, literature and social work. The Ghetto Girl stereotype combined Jews' concerns about acculturation and their differences from Americans with Americans' fears of the "huddled masses" of immigrants at their shores. At the same time, the "Young Jewish Woman in Search of Marriage" became a pervasive image in American popular culture, and, at first, a more acceptable vision of Jewish womanhood. Her goals—marriage and domestic life—were strategies that helped Jews move up the class ladder, closer to the "real" America. Yet this image of the Jewish woman also made other Jews nervous. Once she was married she became financially dependent on her husband's income, a sign of mobility, but she put pressure on him to support her as she focused on buying items that would signal her family's Americanization.

During the 1930s and 1940s, with anti-Semitism a constant outside threat, American Jews turned inward and struggled over how to deal with their economic success. Economically comfortable parents fought with children who did not want to follow their parents' lives of endless work and upward mobility. The Jewish family, rather than the individual, became the context for Americanization, in such works as the radio saga "The Rise of the Goldbergs."

The "Jewish Mother" of lore made her appearance in the 1950s, as American Jews moved to newly developed suburbs. But even as they entered the middle class, Jews did not get the social and cultural acceptance they sought. Jewish men and non-Jews blamed Jewish mothers for this lingering discrimination. As portrayed in comedy routines and magazines of the time, Jewish mothers represented excess: They plied their families with food and manipulative affection, they personified guilt in their demands for unquestioning loyalty, and they were out of touch with the New World in which they and their families lived. From the clubs of the Catskills to the stage of the Ed Sullivan show, the Jewish Mother exemplified the dystopia of American suburban life, even to those who had never met Jews.

By the 1970s, the Jewish Mother had given birth to the JAP, the Jewish American Princess stereotype. The JAP, with her excessive material demands on men and her inability to care for and nurture others, spread through humor, greeting cards, t-shirts, and other media. Despite the JAP's ubiquity, Jews were divided over how to interpret her message. Although some women proudly appropri-

(continued on page 44)

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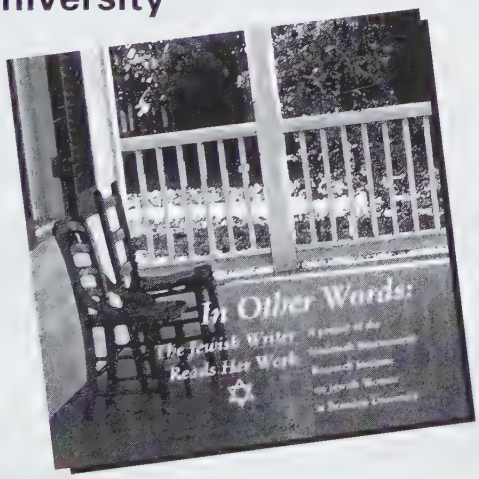

Contributors:

Helen Epstein
Helen Fremont
Myla Goldberg
Kathryn Grody
Eva Hoffman
Irena Klepfisz
Jane Lazarre
Lesléa Newman
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Cynthia Ozick
Grace Paley
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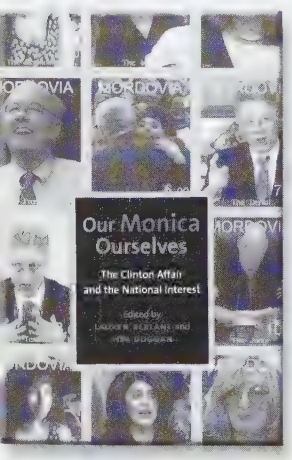
HIRIJW Mission Statement
The Hadassah International Research Institute on Jewish Women, founded at Brandeis University in 1997 by Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc. is the world's first university-based research institute devoted exclusively to the study of Jewish women. The mission of the HIRIJW is to inform and benefit Jewish communities around the world through scholarly and artistic projects about Jewish women and gender issues, and to build a strong international network of Jewish women to sustain these activities in their communities.

Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest (edited by Lauren Berlant and Lisa Duggan, New York University Press, $18.95) is an anthology of essays looking back on the Clinton/Lewinsky affair with a new set of crucial questions. Scholars and journalists discuss how coverage of the event reflected our cultural notions of democracy and sexuality, ethnicity and feminism.

Of particular interest to Lilith readers is "Moniker," an essay by Marjorie Garber addressing Monica's Jewishness, and the impact that this has had on her representation in American culture. Garber's essay traces popular portrayals of Monica, from the bad jokes ("A Jewish girl with oral sex? I don't believe it," said Jackie Mason) to the popular fixation on Lewinsky's mouth (she was dubbed "Hot Lips" by a BBC newscaster, tubes of Monica's lipstick shade were completely sold out after her interview with Barbara Walters). Garber shows us how stereotypes of Jewish women—such as the Jewish American Princess, the seductive Jewess, and the Jewish female "big-mouth"—were the undercurrents behind the popular fascination with Monica.



One delightful observation that Garber makes is the parallel between this affair and the Purim story. "The play casts itself," writes Garber: Bill Clinton plays King Ahasverosh, while "Hillary is Vashti, the headstrong proto-feminist queen...and Monica, needless to say, is Esther, the beautiful Jewess."

—RACHEL KRANSON

Emotional and poetic, **The Get: A Spiritual Memoir of Divorce** (by Elise Edelson Katch, Simcha Press, $10.95) is the story of one woman's divorce from her husband, and the important sense of closure that the get (Jewish divorce) process provided her during that traumatic time.

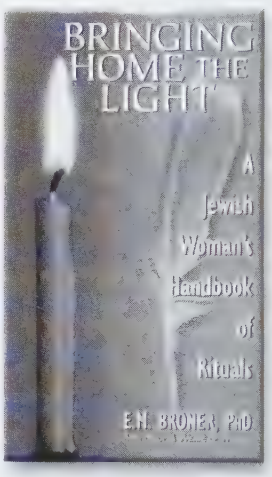
While the get experience was an important, if harrowing, healing ritual for the author, she does not neglect to mention the indignities women often face when trying to obtain a Jewish divorce. This book is a poignant reminder of how psychologically challenging the get process can be, even when both partners are willing to cooperate with the proceedings.

RK

Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives (edited by Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna, Brandeis University Press, $24.95) is a compilation of essays about Jewish women in America that covers a wide range of time periods, regions, and approaches to gendered history. One contribution takes us back to the lives of Jewish women in Colonial times (Holly Snyder's "Queens of the Household: The Jewish Women of British America, 1700-1800"), while Deborah Lipstadt's essay surveys Jewish-American feminism from the 1960s to the present day. The regional range of these essays is just as wide. William Toll writes about Jewish women in the American West, Dianne Ashton discusses the lives of Jewish women in both the North and South during the Civil War, and Felicia Herman covers Jewish Sisterhoods in New York City at the turn of the Twentieth Century. While a few essays describe the lives of individual Jewish-American women (for example, Joyce Antler's piece on Justine Wise Polier), others discuss the shifting cultural definitions of Jewish women's identity (Eric L. Goldstein's "Between Race and Religion: Jewish Women and Self-Definition in Late Nineteenth Century America"). This diversity of approach and subject matter attests both to the rich history of Jewish women in America and to Jewish women's history as a dynamic and growing field of study.

–RK

Read **Bringing Home the Light: A Jewish Women's Handbook of Rituals** (by E.M. Broner, Council Oak Books, $22.95) if you're looking for creative Jewish feminist rituals, or just for the sheer pleasure of Broner's lovely prose. The rituals that Broner describes are wide in scope and purpose—they range from rituals designed to bring about peace between Jewish and Muslim communities, to personal rituals of loss, aging, and the body. This book is punctuated with stories and anecdotes from the lives of actual women, making it a good read as well as a valuable resource.



—RK

Though it's hard to believe, the Jewish addition to the Chicken Soup series—**Chicken Soup for the Jewish Soul** (edited by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins, Health Communications, $12.95)—has only just hit bookstores. Ironic, considering that the chicken soup-as-medicine metaphor comes straight out of Jewish-American culture. Included in the anthology are short stories by some well-known Jewish women (such as Yaffa Eliach and Bel Kaufman) and some very well-known Jewish women (Golda Meir, Anne Frank).

While all of these stories seem engineered to elicit a tear or two, there is one

story, by Rachel Naomi Remen, that really hits home. In "The Presence of God," a young Remen cannot understand her grandfather's claim that God is present when ten men gather in a minyan, but remains absent at a gathering of ten women. In the month before he dies, however, he tells his granddaughter that she is a minyan, all by herself. Someone pass me a Kleenex.

RK

At a critical turning point, facing 40 with two young children and a clinical psychology practice, Wendy Mogel happened to attend a Rosh Hashanah service. "Now we could see how these people, the Jews of West Los Angeles, celebrated their ancient holy day," she says.

From that single experience, Mogel, who had known almost nothing about Judaism from her Jewish parents, became increasingly interested in the practices of "these people," and began to study Torah, Talmud, and Jewish tradition. Soon, her own outlook was inextricably bound with Jewish teachings, and she found herself bringing these theories into her clinical practice.

The result is **The Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Using Jewish Teachings to Raise Self-Reliant Children** (by Wendy Mogel, Scribner, $14.00), a guide to childrearing following three principles of Jewish thought: moderation, celebration, and sanctification. Mogel talks about everything from picky eaters to punishments, all with Jewish traditions as the source for solutions.

—SARAH VAN ARSDALE

God-Optional Judaism: Alternatives for Cultural Jews Who Love Their History, Heritage, and Community (by Judith Seid, Citadel Press, $19.95) offers alternatives to God-centered religious practices of Judaism, notably the "Big Three" movements in North America. Seid opts for a humanistic Judaism concerned with universal justice, equality and spirituality that stems from various other sources, such as the natural world or art. She traces the roots of the recent Orthodox-backed premises that have minimized the importance and meaning of cultural Judaism, by bringing to light the heterogeneous nature of Jewish community throughout history. Seid addresses the difficulty of finding a congregation that appeals to the surprising number of North American Jews who do not identify as religiously Jewish, but who seek an embracing community for ethnic or cultural Jewish identification. The book includes a how-to guide for life cycles and festivals, and information on finding or starting your own secular/humanistic Jewish group. As important as these practical tools is the premise that diversity is a major component of the evolution and survival of Judaism.

—DANA HERCBERGS

The Haunted Smile: The Story of Jewish Comedians in America (by Lawrence J. Epstein, Public Affairs, $30) is a pop-culture historian's informative history of Jewish performance humor in vaudeville, radio, film and TV from turn-of-the-century European Jewish immigration to the present. Epstein juxtaposes the ups and downs of Jewish assimilation and anti-Semitism in the U.S. with Jews' steady success in comedy, crediting this to an ability to adapt to changing media as well as to adverse social conditions. This book also explores women's entry into comedy, notably to stand-up and TV, analyzing the stereotypes imposed on Jewish women and the breakthroughs of famous figures who paved the way for the likes of Fran Drescher, Rosanne and others. With snips from famous scripts, biographical details from better-and-lesser-known artists, and a section of photos, this thoughtful, interesting, and entertaining read frames the psychology of performers and audiences in the climate of the last century in American life.

—DH

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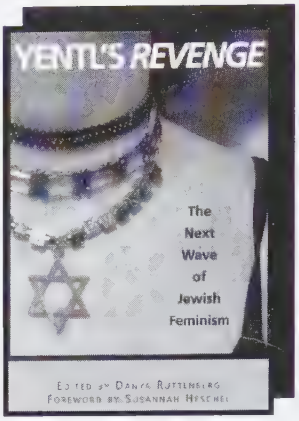

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(continued from page 40)

ated the title, feminist women and men exposed the JAP stereotype as a modern anti-Semitic and sexist slur against Jewish women. Prell acknowledges the work of Lilith Magazine in launching a powerful communal campaign in the 1980s to condemn and combat the image of the JAP in popular culture.

Starting in the late 1970s, Jewish women responded to these stereotypes and were finally heard. Jewish women writers, artists, and performers created unforgettable and often uncomfortable cultural images, such as Gilda Radner's Rhonda Weiss on Saturday Night Live, and artist Rhonda Lieberman's "Pushy/Cushy/Tushy," a triplet of beaded fake Chanel bags emblazoned with pictures of comedienne Sandra Bernhard. Prell brings a nuanced analysis of these controversial representations, rather than dismissing them as reflections of the artists' "Jewish self-hatred."

On a personal note, Prell also realizes how difficult it must have been for her own mother, growing up as the child of immigrants. In order for her to become an "American Woman" her mother had to reject her familial and cultural milieu. "I now understand," she writes, "that the daily battles with my mother throughout my adolescence—about who I could or could not be, and how to go about growing up—were in large measure a war between her vision of womanhood, which was shaped by the shame of being the daughter of immigrants, and mine, which was shaped by a search for a life unconstrained by those traditions."

In our struggle to create a society with choices and options for "Jewish womanhood" (and Jewish manhood) it's important for Jewish feminists to remember the long history of these gender stereotypes, even as we struggle against them.

SUSAN SAPIRO

Our Reviewers

ARIELLE DERBY recently graduated from Smith College and lives in Brooklyn, where, she says, she is pursing justice, equality, and good books for all. • REBECCA GUTTERMAN is a writer, theater artist and third-year rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College in New York. • REENA SIGMAN FRIEDMAN is Associate Professor of Modern Jewish Civilization at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and a Contributing Editor of Lilith. She writes extensively on topics relating to Jewish women and to American Jewish religious and social history.• HELEN SCHARY MOTRO, an American lawyer and writer living in Israel, is a columnist for the Jerusalem Post. Her work appears frequently in the American press. • DANYA RUTTENBERG is the editor of *Yentl's Revenge: The Next Wave of Jewish Feminism*, and a Contributing Editor of Lilith. • SUSAN SAPIRO is on the staff of Ma'yan: The Jewish Women's Project of the JCC in Manhattan, and is a former Lilith intern. She is a co-founder and co-facilitator of the No Small Change Young Women's Tzedakah Collective. • TERREN ILANA WEIN recently graduated from the University of Illinois with a Master of Library Science degree.

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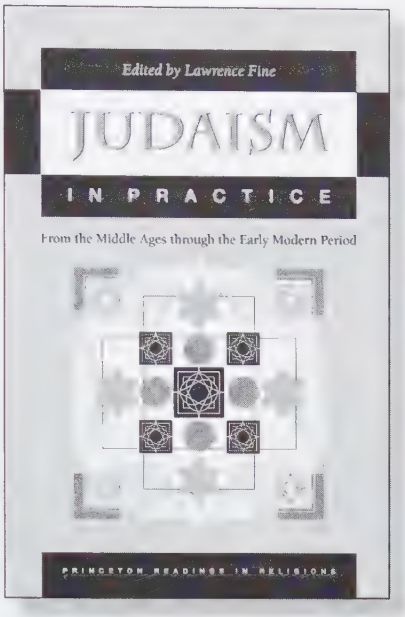
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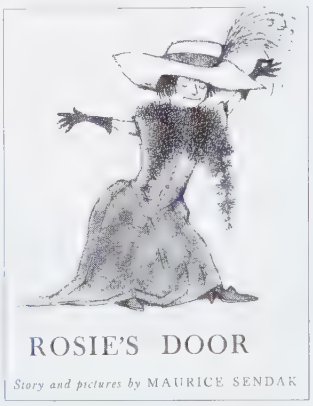
NEW YORK CITY

Browse the wish lists of New York City teachers and finance their projects. The website was created a year ago by history teacher Charles Best to link philanthropists and teachers. Since the World Trade Center attack this connection has helped bring an Afghan artist for workshops in a Bronx high school, an architect to help fourth graders design memorials to WTC victims and "recovery journals" for a class of students to write and draw responses to the terrorist attack. *www.DonorsChoose.com*

Jewish women as survivors. Changing scholarship and the new attention being paid to women's experience of the Holocaust are themes of a symposium on February 14th, 3-8 PM. Susan Weidman Schneider, Lilith Editor-in-Chief, will give the keynote address, followed by a panel discussion highlighting post-traumatic psychotherapy, and the compelling stories of women themselves. *Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, One Battery Park Plaza, New York, NY 10004-1484; (212)968-1800.*

The Center for Jewish History in New York City houses the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Sephardi Federation, the Leo Baeck Institute, Yeshiva University Museum and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Tours every Tuesday and Thursday at 2PM, include the Reading Room, Genealogy Institute and major exhibitions. You can also visit a book/gift shop and kosher café. Tours are $6 per person; $4 for seniors and students, an additional fee includes the Yeshiva University Museum galleries. *Center for Jewish History, 15 W. 16th St., New York, NY 10011; (212) 294-8301; fax (212) 294-8302. For groups, contact Julie Kaplan at (917) 606-8226.*



Where the Wild Things Are: Maurice Sendak In His Own Words and Pictures, is a multi media exhibit that includes manuscripts, books, letters, photographs, illustrations, a video tape of spunky heroine Really Rosie, a lengthy Sendak interview, plus imaginative play spaces. Created at Atlanta's William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum by curator Jennifer Needle Campbell, the show will tour through 2004 at the Skirball Museum, L.A.; Discovery Museum, Chattanooga, TN; theYoung At Art Children's Museum, Davie, FL; Children's Museum of San Jose; the Strong Museum, Rochester, NY and the Pittsburgh Children's Museum. From January 12 to May 2, 2002 see it at *Manhattan's Children's Museum, 212 W. 83rd St., New York NY 10024; (212)721-1234.*

MEDIEVAL TIMES

Cairo's Ben Ezra Synaogogue: A Gateway to Medieval Mediterranean Life. See documents and fragments from that city's famous Geniza, or repository, which was lost until 1896 when Scottish twin sisters Margaret Gibson and Agnes Lewis brought it to the attention of Solomon Schechter, then at Cambridge University. The "Gib-Lew" sisters found on the open market and purchased a fragment of the only extant Hebrew text of apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus, or the Book of Wisdom by Ben Sira, written in about 200 BCE. This exhibit documents Jewish civilization and the Islamic milieu of the Middle Ages with personal correspondence from Moses Maimonides, and the Spanish Hebrew poet Judah Halevi, a 15th-century letter from a wife asking her husband to return home from a business trip, and rabbinic court records of a businesswoman's affair with a married man. Visitors enter a simulated Ben Ezra Synagogue and its neighborhood complete with a Cairo teahouse. Color catalog available.Through August 18, 2002 at the *Spertus Museum, 618 South Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60605; (312)322-1747; musm@spertus.edu; www.spertus.edu*

The Medieval Feminist Index covers journal articles, book reviews, and essays in books about women, sexuality, and gender during the Middle Ages. *http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/database/about/medfem.htm*

EDUCATION

Peace of Mind in Jewish Education is a model interest-free loan program Jewish communities can set up to support their teachers and alleviate some of their financial pressures in a notoriously underpaid profession. This program allows teachers to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the education of their students. You can request a program kit that includes sample forms, loan agreements by-laws and advice from *The Shul, 9540 Collins, Ave., Surfside, FL 33154, (305)868-1411; miriam@theshul.org; www.theshul.org*

After Anne Frank: Children' Books About the Holocaust. Anne Frank's diary was originally published in the Netherlands in 1947, and has sold over twenty-five million copies

in more than 50 languages. An exhibit, curated by Michele Palmer, offers selected examples of hundreds of other children's books on the Holocaust published since then, plus a bibliography. The books in the exhibit are part of the Dodd Center's permanent collection. Through December 31 at the *Babbidge Library, The Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06369; www.lib.uconn.edu/exhibtions*

Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, Vienna 1898 - Auschwitz 1944, is memorialized in a special exhibition organized by the Simon Wiesenthal Center/Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. This remarkable Viennese-born, Bauhaus-trained artist was arrested and deported to the Terezin ghetto/concentration camp where she used her artistic talents and teaching experience to bring hope and beauty to the children. Her lesson plans and teaching techniques have survived, and many of her methods form the foundation of present-day art therapy. In August 1945, a former prisoner of Terezin brought to the Prague Jewish community two suitcases filled with 5,000 poems and drawings by the children of Terezin. After ten years, the drawings were rediscovered and exhibited. Many of the young artists were immortalized with the 1959 publication of the book *...I never saw another butterfly.* This exhibition opens in Atlanta beginning December 2, 2001-March 10, 2002. It contains Dicker-Brandeis's work before and during the war. Educational programs in conjunction with this exhibition will emphasize the value of creative expression as a means of spiritual resistance and survival. *William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, 1440 Spring St., NW, Atlanta, GA 30309; (404)873-1661; fax (404)873-4009; www.shalomatlanta.org*

Portrait by Friedl Dicker-Brandeis

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The International Network for the Rights of Female Victims of Violence in Pakistan (INRFVVP) exposes the unspeakable violence of "honor" murders of girls and women, carried out in the name of a grossly distorted version of Islam. This organization was founded by Riffat Hassan, a professor at the University of Louisville, KY and an Islamic scholar who has been tireless in her efforts to advance a feminist reading of the Qur'an and of Islamic law. To learn more about *INRFVVP, P.O. Box 17202, Louisville, KY 40217; (502)637-4090; fax 502-637-4002; inrfvvp@inrfvvp.org; www.inrfvvp.org.*

Love—All That and More is the title of a new video series and a curriculum on healthy relationships. It comes with a guide for facilitators working with Jewish groups. Take a look at the 2001-2002 resource catalog of an organization that has been serving religious and community groups since 1977: *Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 2400 N. 45th St. #10, Seattle, WA 98103; (206)634-1903; fax (206)634-0115; cpsdv@cpsdv.org; www.cpsdv.org*

The Task Force on Famly Violence: 2001-2002 Resource Directory. Here is a 30-page directory with training programs, prevention, direct service, shelters, therapy programs for abused women, programs on elder abuse and more. *UJA-Federation of New York, 130 E. 49th St., New York, NY 10022; (212) 980-1000.*

HEALTH

www.GynCancer Pregnancy.com offers emotional support to women diagnosed with gynecologic cancer while pregnant. Jamie Roumeliotis and Mureall Hebert founded this website after meeting online while each had this traumatic experience. In addition, GynCancerPregnancy.com features links to gynecologic cancer medical sites.

Talking with your parents about health coverage? What does Medicare cover? Do people with Medicare need additional insurance? Should you buy a long-term-care insurance policy? How can you tell a good policy from a bad one? A consumer booklet may help you make informed decisions. *Free from the Kaiser Family Foundation, 2400 Sand Hill Rd., Menlo Park, CA 94025; toll free 1-800-656-4533; www.kff.org/docs/parents*

COLLECTIONS

In Other Words: The Jewish Writer Reads Her Work includes Helen Fremont, Myla Goldberg, Kathryn Grody, Eva Hoffman, Irena Klepfisz, Jane Lazarre, Lesléa Newman, Alicia Ostriker, Cynthia Ozick, Grace Paley, Marge Piercy and Nessa Rapoport, reading their stories, essays and poems on a two-disc CD audio collection. $18 plus tax and shipping from the *Hadassah International Research Institute on Jewish Women, Brandeis University, MS 079, Waltham, MA 02545-9110; (781)736-2064; fax (781)736-2078; hirijw@brandeis.edu; www. brandeis.edu/hirijw/*

The Jewish Counter-Culture Archive is seeking papers and artifacts from the late 1960s to the late 1970s. Send material from havurot, minyanim, early Jewish feminist groups, Jewish political organizations, collectives, and the alternative Jewish press to curators Riv-Ellen Prell and Chava Weissler for the American Jewish Historical Society. *Riv-Ellen Prell, Program in American Studies, University of Minnesota, prell001@tc.umn.edu*

—COMPILED BY NAOMI DANIS

8 Lessons for Hanukkah, Useful All Year

BY ANNA SCHNUR-FISHMAN

A future latke

TEN HANUKKAHS AGO, WHEN I WAS ABOUT four and my brother nine, my parents decided that it was time to make giving *tzedakah* a family project, and not just something they did on their own. They coupled this idea with another—their wish to take some of the consumerist curse off December—and instituted the following ritual. Here is the ceremony as we do it, including eight Hanukkah lessons I've learned from it.

Around October, my parents and brother and I begin throwing all of the *tzedakah* appeals that arrive in the mail into one big basket. By December it's stuffed. **Hanukkah Lesson #1: It is amazing how many organizations need money.**

A week or so before Hanukkah begins, we all sit down and sort through the envelopes, tossing out the ones that none of us really cares about. For each one that is left (maybe 20 or 25)—and any other *tzedakahs* we like thrown in, too—we make an index card. (As a compulsive family, we excel at activities that involve lining up cards in little rows on a table. I tend to get carried away arranging the cards alphabetically, categorically, and by the date of the appeal, but this really isn't a necessary part of the process.)

Next, one person describes whatever organizations the others don't know much about. This year, for example, my brother has been very involved with an orphanage in Delhi, India, so he spoke quite eloquently on behalf of his index card, waving it in the air and pressing it to his chest. **Hanukkah Lesson #2: Speak out for what you believe in.** We do this because we soon vote on the *tzedakahs* we want to give to, and because "it's important," as my father says every year, "to **be educated voters,** and to **make educated decisions.**" This is **Hanukkah Lesson #3.**

Then we each vote for eight charities—one per scrap of paper—putting our ballots into my late grandfather's old hat, as is our custom, with the goal of dedicating every night of Hanukkah to a different *tzedakah*. **Hanukkah Lesson #4: When you do something nice as a family, include your ancestors.**

At this point my mother is known to invoke Ethics of the Fathers 2:21—**"It is not up to us to complete the work, yet neither are we free to desist from it."** That's **Hanukkah Lesson #5.** She says, "It's human nature for us to fix nothing because we can't fix everything. There are many worthy charities that are going to bite the dust in our little election here, and that feels bad, which is good." It is her style as a rabbi to say something that leaves you thinking, "Huh?"

When we tally up the votes—paying particular attention to my father's handwriting, because he has a history of stuffing ballot boxes—we generally end up with a lot of ties, maybe 15 charities altogether, with most clustered into categories—for example: the environment, women's issues, Jewish issues, and causes promoting racial and economic justice.

Here's where the debating and horse-trading begins, much of it aimed at knocking out some organizations that will only weaken the chances of others. (For example, if Planned Parenthood and NARAL are both in there, they'll probably both lose in the final vote.) This year my father went head-to-head for Common Cause, my mother nearly drew blood for Zero Population Growth, and I argued for a fund to free Custer the elephant—a case met with scorn. **Hanukkah Lesson #6: Go for it. You never know.**

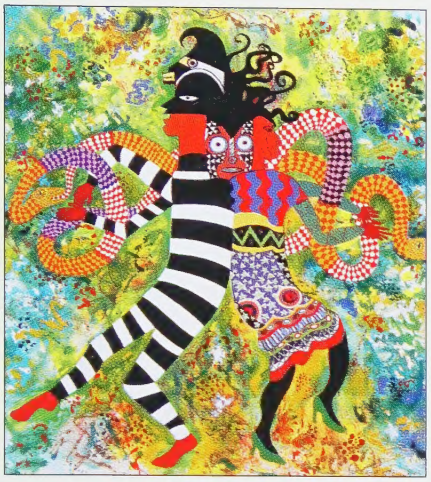
My mother and I tend to prefer local organizations over national ones (the local women's shelter, the local soup kitchen); I lean towards literacy programs and anything involving cute animals. We vote again, and again and again, until we're finally down to eight. Then we reflect bitterly on what everybody else did wrong during the politically corrupted process, and enjoy a moment or two of mourning for the good causes that died, and shouldn't have, on the kitchen table.

Hanukkah Lesson #7: If not now, when? Nobody is allowed to leave the table until eight checks are written out—this year we gave $100 to each cause—and they're put in stamped, addressed envelopes which we then hang in our "Hanukkah Room"—the living room festooned with blue-foil *dreydl* decorations and every lopsided construction-paper latke and menorah that my brother and I ever created.

Then comes Hanukkah. On each night, before lighting the candles, we pluck one envelope off the holiday décor, say a sentence about why that particular charity matters, and dedicate that evening's candles to it. One of us must then be cajoled into running outside in the cold to actually put the envelope in the mailbox. The rule is that no one can light candles until the evening has been consecrated by the sound of the mailbox lid clunking. **Hanukkah Lesson #8: It feels good to give charity when you're sitting in front of your not-yet-opened presents.**

ANNA SCHNUR-FISHMAN is a 9th grader at the Boston Latin School.

Lilith note cards



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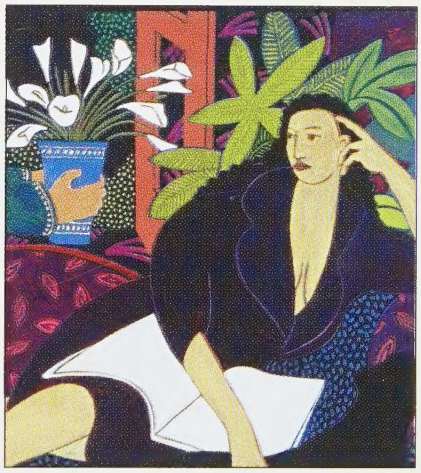

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